45th BPP Founding Anniversary Events (Back Page)

COMMEMORATOR

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CCBPP ADVANCES COMMUNITY SELF-HELP

Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party's (CCBPP) Membership Campaign has been growing in leaps and bounds this year, particularly through weekly literature tables, the community canvass and the weekly Li'l Bobby Hutton Adult Literacy sessions.

CCBPP organizers have trained over 20 new volunteers in how to conduct a CCBPP membership neighborhood canvass. As an extension of this process, we also established weekly membership meetings where CCBPP members discuss their needs and ways that CCBPP programs can address them. Lack of living-wage employment, rising violent crime and adult illiteracy are among the major concerns discussed at these meetings.

"CCBPP's neighborhood canvasses are engaging people in organizing community survival programs and in a process that builds up the power needed to end oppression and exploitation," stated Melvin Dickson, Chairman of CCBPP. "Having direct dialog and grassroots association with all sections of the communities is essential to our future."

CCBPP currently has an active membership of students who are concerned and involved in their community and neighborhoods. Some are looking into the ramifications of the gang injunction law that was recently passed by the Oakland city government. Some are involved in the Oscar Grant campaign against police repression. Others are bringing economic issues to the college campuses. These are working class youth, and a few elders, who are focused on the problems facing

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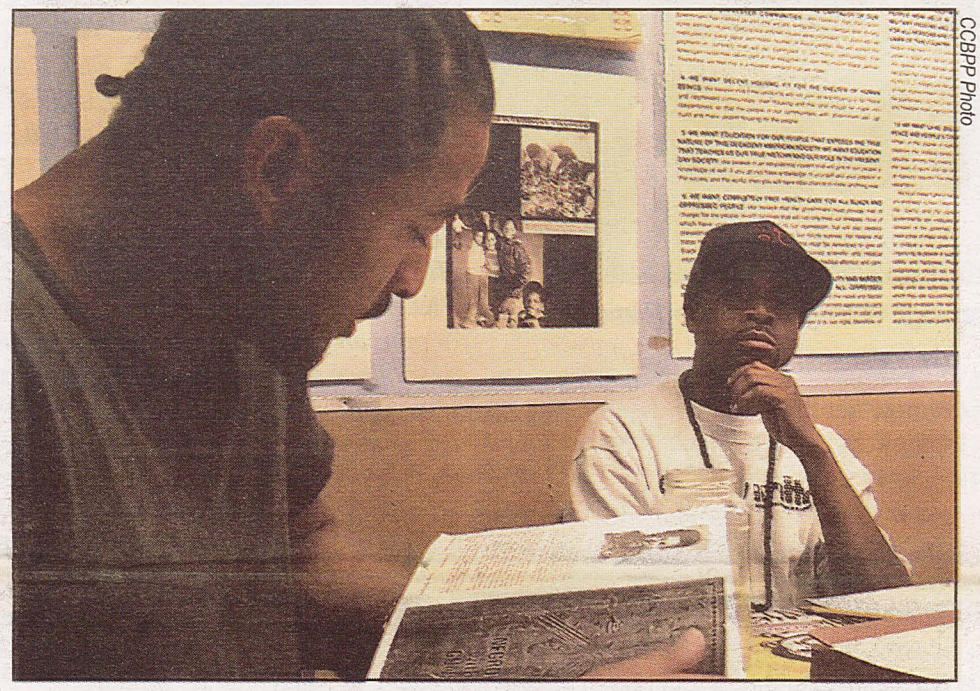


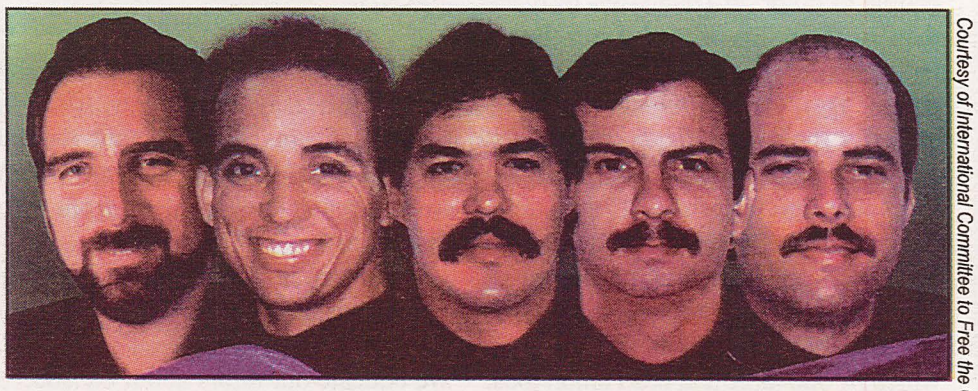
CCBPP Photo

CCBPP members Toussaint DuBois (left) and Chester Jenkins (right) focus on reading topics at CCBPP weekly Political Education and Adult Reading Session.

Relatives of the Cuban Five Break the U.S. Wall of Silence

NEWSFLASH: René González, one of the Cuban Five, was released from U.S. federal prison on October 7, ordered to serve three years of FBI-supervised probation in Florida and not allowed to return home or to receive a visit from his wife. Cuba and the International Committee to Free the Cuban Five demand his *real* freedom, *now*.

For 13 years, five Cuban antiterrorists remained unjustly imprisoned in the United States. On October 7, René González Sehwerert completed his prison term and was released under sentencing terms requiring him to serve three more years of FBI-supervised probation in Florida. His wife, Olga Salanueva, is still denied a U.S. visa to visit him and his four comrades remain unjustly imprisoned. During *Commemorator* Editor Melvin Dickson's July 2010 Cuban Press Tour, he was invited to a presentation at the Havana headquarters of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos) (ICAP) that poignantly called for tangible acts of solidarity by friends of the Cuban Five in the U.S., manifested by the breadth and numbers of Americans demanding that the U.S. government release and ensure the safe return of the Cuban Five to their homeland.



Courtesy of International Committee to Free the Cuban Five

The Cuban Five are (left to right) René González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González Llort and Gerardo Hernández.

The Cuban Five collected information in the late 90's in the Miami-Dade area to uncover illegal plots and actions of U.S.-based terrorist groups suspected of involvement in acts of sabotage and terror against the people and government of Cuba. In good faith, the government of Cuba turned over the evidence collected by the Cuban Five to the U.S. government, asking to coordinate with the U.S. in a campaign to root out terrorism in the United States directed at their nation. Rather than prosecuting the exposed terrorists, the U.S. government's response was to arrest the five Cubans and charge them with 26 criminal counts, up to and including conspiracy to commit murder.

For the 17 months leading up to trial, the U.S. government held the Cuban Five incommunicado. Then they set Miami as the trial venue, a city well known as having the greatest concentration of anti-Cuba sentiment in the United States, in general, and for being a haven of terrorist activities against Cuba. All this set the stage for denying the men a fair trial.

None of the charges against the five Cubans involved violence in

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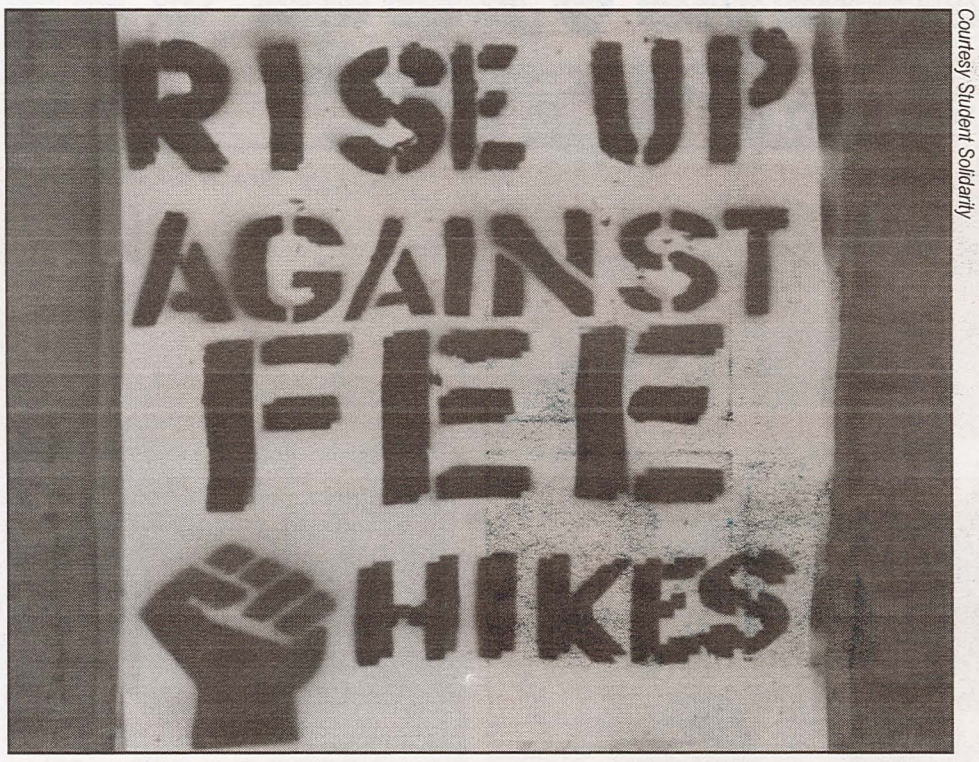
EDITORIAL

Private Education for the Privileged Class, Plantation Education for Everyone Else



Courtesy Student Solidarity

UC Berkeley students display their message during Geronimo Remembrance Day in Oakland, California, this July.

Working-class students throughout the United States are demanding access to education. Not only are public schools closing and tuitions rising, but state and federal educational funding cuts have made a college education virtually unavailable except for those from well-off families. Low-income, especially minority, youth are being channeled into the prison system in record numbers.

Incarceration rates climbed in the 1990s and reached historic highs in recent decades. A June 2003 Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) report listed 2,078,570 men and women are locked up, an increase of 57,600 state, local and federal inmates over the previous year, over 60% of those inmates are people of color. In 1995, 16% of black men in their 20s who did not attend college were in county jail or in state prison. By 2004, 21% were incarcerated. By their mid-30s, 6 of 10 black men who had dropped out of school had spent time in prison. These statistics are not surprising given that African American household income is just 62% of that of Caucasians.

With the shift from factory jobs, which by and large had been union jobs, unskilled workers of all races have lost ground, but none more so than black men. Official unemployment hovers between 9-10% but for poor and minorities, unemployment is closer to 30%. Illiteracy is at an all-time high, and the State of California leads the pack. In 1992 California's illiteracy rate was 8%. Today it has more than doubled and is over 20%!

According to a CBS news release in December 2004, three thousand children nationwide drop out of high school daily. Of those who do graduate from high school, 64% can't read. In the inner cities, more than half of all black men do not finish high school. With cost of college tuition skyrocketing, education is now unaffordable for the majority of people living in the United States. Only 11% of students at the nation's top universities are from low-income families, and the average undergraduate student will leave college with a debt of $26,000. Many are forced to drop out because the classes they need for their degree have been cancelled or are full due to teacher lay-offs and over enrollment of students to generate more tuition income. So students cannot get the classes they need for their degree and they cannot afford to pay for the full four to five years or more required now to get a degree and therefore do not graduate. They still end up with tens of thousands of dollars of debt and no degree.

The BPP Ten-Point Program and Platform, Point #5

What makes CCBPP's Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign different than the average government funded bourgeoisie literacy program is that we approach the problem from two directions:

The first is we provide one-on-one tutoring assistance for illiterate adults who want to learn to read and write. We educate our tutors about the source of the problem, poverty. We teach that individual solutions haven't worked. We teach the economic and political reasons for illiteracy and how to overcome them. We understand that the problem stems from an economic system based on exploitation; that maintaining illiteracy guarantees readily available cheap labor, whether through prison industries or service jobs.

Our second program is educating the community about the BPP Ten-Point Program. Point Number Five talks about the need for real education for our people and one of the programs we are focusing on is a community-based literacy campaign targeting the families of low-income and minority workers, since one finds a large percentage of illiteracy among this strata, and this is where the program is needed the most. We teach reading using the BPP Ten-Point Platform and Program and materials from BPP history, as well as current articles from *The Commemorator* that address the ongoing needs of low-income and minority people today.

The widely discredited bourgeoisie educational system has already failed working class and minority communities across the board by ignoring the real needs of these various and unique working-class communities.

POINT #5: WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. *We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have a knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.*

Instead of addressing the real needs of working class people, since the early 1990s, with the rise of the prison industrial complex, and the use of gang injunction laws, our society has now created a slave workforce whose labor can be exploited to maximize profit for the bourgeoisie on the backs of men and women who are without resources and cannot afford proper legal representation.

In low-income communities across the country (especially low-income African American communities) conditions have deteriorated to such an extent that our youth have lost hope for a brighter future, unlike past generations when working class communities had at least a glimmer of hope, and young people could reasonably expect to advance their living standard beyond that of their parents.

We must unite our low-income communities behind our Ten-Point Program, building positive programs that meet the day-to-day needs of the people, and at the same time, isolate the reactionary forces that keep low-income communities divided and fighting over the crumbs from the plantation system.

All Power to the People!

Opinions and positions taken in articles with bylines are those of their writers. The views expressed in the bylined editorials and opinion pieces published by The Commemorator *do not necessarily indicate its endorsement or support — Editor*

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A Tribute to a True Fighter, A Call to Action
In Memoriam: Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt)

Photo courtesy of Kiilu Nyasha

(From left to right) Willie (Sundiata) Tate, Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt), Luis (Bato) Talamantez, and Kiilu Nyasha at the August 1997 event held at Lowell Park in West Oakland, celebrating Geronimo's exoneration after 27 years in prison.

By Melvin Dickson

Geronimo jiJaga Pratt, U.S. political prisoner for 27 years, former BPP Deputy Minister of Defense, a leader of the Los Angeles BPP Chapter, a two and a half tour Vietnam vet, died on June 3 at his adopted home in Imbaseni village, 15 miles from Arusha, Tanzania, where he had lived the last years of his life following his long-fought exoneration from a trumped up murder charge and release from prison in June 1997. He was 63 years old.

At the top of the FBI's list of Panthers to be "neutralized," he was framed in 1971 for a 1968 murder that had taken place in Santa Monica. Pratt was in Oakland when the murder occurred. After many years of legal battles, uncovering evidence that had been withheld by the FBI, DA's office and Los Angeles Police Department, his conviction was overturned. He subsequently won a $4.5 million lawsuit against the FBI and LAPD for false incarceration, which he used to establish the Kuji Foundation with his wife Joju Cleaver, benefiting African development and community programs in his Louisiana bayou hometown.

Geronimo grew up in segregated Louisiana, and faced the terror of Klan violence. During the 1960s, he served two tours of duty in Vietnam in the 82nd Airborne, and returned a highly decorated veteran in 1968. Martin Luther King, Jr. had just been assassinated when Geronimo returned from Vietnam. He enrolled at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he joined the Black Panther Party.

In 1968, the U.S. imperialist war against Vietnam was escalating and unemployment in the U.S. was growing. People were beginning to make the connection between the two, in their wallets. Before his assassination, Dr. King had launched the Poor Peoples' Campaign and had gone to Memphis to lead the Black sanitation workers' strike, which was growing in militancy by the day. This move inspired a new tactical direction for the civil rights movement, away from the pure, turn-the-other-cheek orientation. This new thrust carried the potential to unite black youth, white youth and the entire working class, and the bourgeoisie ruling class recognized it as a threat.

The FBI saw that Geronimo's ability to articulate his political views combined with his combat skills meant he had the potential to unite his brothers and sisters from the black ghettoes throughout the country, especially those comrades he left in the military, against United States government oppression. In the view of J. Edgar Hoover's FBI, Geronimo and the Panthers in general had to be "neutralized." Hoover had publicly stated that the Black Panther Party was a threat to the internal security of the United States; fabricating a story and falsifying evidence in order to frame people like Geronimo was seen by the FBI and LAPD as justifiable abrogation of the U.S. Constitutional protections.

They first attempted to murder him in 1969 — Fred Hampton style — with a barrage of bullets into his bed during the night, but Geronimo was sleeping on the floor due to spinal injuries from his military service in Vietnam, and had been trained in self-defense. As a result, he survived this assassination attempt. Next came the murder charge frame-up.

In November 1990, Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party's (CCBPP) first edition of *The Commemorator* carried a story about Geronimo jiJaga and his case. Realizing that much of the Black community was not aware of the significance of Geronimo's political stance and his plight, CCBPP organized a petition calling for his release from prison for a crime he had not committed.

Over the next seven years, *The Commemorator* published updates on the legal battle to get Geronimo's conviction overturned from the time the evidence was brought to light in 1990 until his release in June 1997. CCBPP helped organize a celebration of his release held in Oakland, California on August 16, 1997, which was attended by 3,000 people. Geronimo spoke for some time to those gathered. *The Commemorator* printed excerpts of that speech in the December 1997 issue *(Vol. 7, Number 3)*.

We at CCBPP see it as the most fitting tribute to Geronimo to reprint his words, and exhortation to action, and to call for putting the principles he stood and fought for into action. His words ring true and timely today:

"This is not my forte, speaking before crowds. I've been called to speak. I'd rather do it one on one. In the meantime, while I have the opportunity, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the brothers and sisters who are left behind those prison walls who are still struggling and sacrificing for you, where your sons are at, your daddies are at, where your uncles are at, where your sisters are at. I want to convey to you the stark reality of what's going on in this war being waged against us. Prisons have been used and continue to be used for the war of genocide against our people and all struggling people. We know that our uncles and our daddies and our youngsters are constantly being railroaded into those places. We will have to act in order to counteract what's going on.

"What can we do? There's a lot you can do. You can do what you can do, whether it be standing up on a podium, writing a letter, sending some stamps, or organizing fundraisers. You can look within yourself. You are all leaders, period. You know what you can do. Let your conscience be your guide. Those brothers and sisters need your support.

"It requires study to know how you can call people political prisoners who never worked with the Black Panther Party; who never worked for a revolutionary organization. From Hugo Pinell, a Nicaraguan brother who participated in saving my life, there are so many others out there who are unknown; who are unsung heroes who need all your support and more.

"There's Romaine Fitzgerald (another BPP member), the first guy we lost to death row. He's still in prison today, the longest held prisoner in the state system. He was always the longest held. He was busted a year before me, but he didn't get the publicity I got. That's another thing you have to deal with. You focus on one and forget the attention on another, then you have

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Courtesy of Leonard Peltier Defense Committee

Leonard Peltier, world-renowned political prisoner.

Leonard Peltier Remembers Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt)

Greetings to all my friends and compatriots,

Everyone, it seems, knows something about Geronimo Pratt. To all of us, to every human being on the planet, he was a beacon of principle that we should all aspire to emulate. To those directly involved in the struggle, he was one of those gifted, tough as nails warriors who not only had the vision to know what was right, but the strength and courage to stick to his convictions no matter the cost. When he had to be, he was a terror to his enemies.

To me, he was a friend and an ally. I met him in jail of course, so many years ago. He always had so much of my respect.

He gave his all to the fight for liberation, justice, and equality. His effectiveness as a man and a leader can be measured by the extent to which the enemies of justice and equality went in order to try and silence him. It wasn't enough to frame him for murder. It wasn't enough to flush twenty-seven years of his life down a hell hole. No, they had to take those closest to him as well. But even the simultaneous losses

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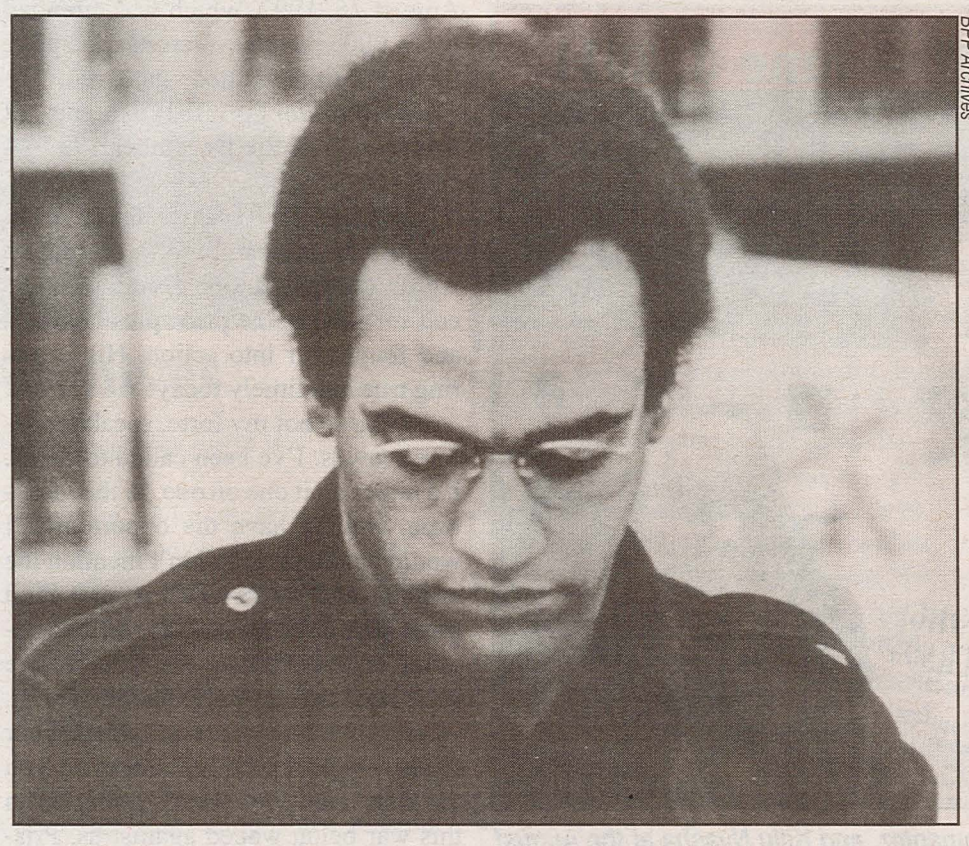
Archives

Formation and Purpose of the Party: What Makes it Different?



BPP Archives

Huey P. Newton, Co-founder of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense and leading BPP political theorist.

*Editor's Note: "Formation and Purpose of the Party: What Makes it Different?" is a segment of Huey Newton's 105-page doctoral thesis entitled "*War Against The Panthers, A Study of Repression in America.*" He explains in his Preface to this work that he wrote it over a period of 13 years, starting the year the Party was founded in 1966 and finished it in 1980 as his doctoral dissertation. Newton received a Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in History of Consciousness from the University of California, Santa Cruz. This work is now published by Harlem River Press, New York & London, as* War Against The Panthers, A Study of Repression in America *and can be found at many bookstores across the country.*

This segment is from Section III, where Newton defines the need for the Party, explains the concept of revolutionary intercommunalism and describes the ways in which the BPP differed from other popular movements of the time, based on the "survival programs" the Party established as a means of self-defense against oppression. CCBPP has reinspired that concept of survival programs with the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign and CCBPP's membership benefit program, including a subscription to The Commemorator.

By 1966, the United States had experienced a recent series of disruptions in several of its major urban Black population centers — Harlem, Watts, Chicago and Detroit. Numerous organizations and leaders representing groups of black people — e.g., SCLC (Martin Luther King, Jr.), the Black Muslims (Elijah Muhammed and Malcolm X), CORE (James Farmer), NAACP (Roy Wilkins) — had repeatedly articulated the causes of these riots or urban rebellions: high unemployment, bad housing, police brutality, poor health care, and inferior educational opportunities. Their consensus on the ills that caused or contributed to the violent explosions in inner cities was confirmed by official investigating bodies such as the Kerner and McCone Commissions. While all groups were generally in agreement on the specific maladies of the society affecting Blacks, they were in disagreement as to the best solution for ending them. The Black nationalists favored separatism; traditional liberals, integration and passage of new legal guarantees; and some of the more activist-oriented demanded "revolution now." Amidst this clamor for social justice, the Black Panther Party was formed in Oakland, California, in 1966.

Ideology of Revolutionary Intercommunalism

The Party differed from other organizations representing Black and poor persons in several respects. First, the Panthers embraced from the outset an explicitly socialist ideology, which it soon named "revolutionary inter-communalism." In essence, the Party acknowledged that it was, despite certain differences, basically socialist or Marxist because it followed the dialectical method and sought to integrate theory and practice. As the founder of the Panthers [quoting from Huey Newton, *To Die for the People* (New York Random House, 1972) pp 25-26] observed:

> We are not mechanical Marxists and we are not historical materialists. Some people think they are Marxists when they are actually following the thoughts of Hegel. Some people think they are Marxists-Leninists but they refuse to be creative, and are, therefore, tied to the past. They are tied to a rhetoric that does not apply to the present set of conditions. They are tied to a set of thoughts that approaches dogma… If we are using the method of dialectical materialism we don't expect to find anything the same even one minute later because "one minute later" is history. If things are in a constant state of change, we cannot expect them to be the same. Words used to describe old phenomena may be useless to describe the new. And if we use the old words to describe new events we run the risk of confusing people and misleading them into thinking that things are static.

This espousal of revolutionary intercommunalism by the BPP obviously influenced the perception of others about it, especially, as will be shown, the federal government. Of equal importance, however, is the effect this ideology has upon the actions of the Party and the decisions of its leadership. Revolutionary intercommunalism provided an important paradigm for interpreting the world, much as a belief in *laissez-faire* capitalism affects the actions of corporate decision makers who embrace it. Thus to the BPP, government opposition to its existence was expected as partial confirmation of its *raison d'etre*. On a more personal level, the BPP leadership felt toward their ideology and its likely opponents that "truth made you a traitor as it often does in a time of scoundrels."

"Revolutionary intercommunalism" not only served to pit the BPP and government law enforcement against each other in ideological struggle, [but also] it gave the Party a perhaps unexpected asset in its struggle for survival. The popular conception of ideology, especially one embracing terminology that seems foreign to traditional democratic politics, is that it is rigid and doctrinaire. Yet to the BPP leadership, its ideology, despite the sound of dogma it may have conveyed to others, served it as a pragmatic methodology for interpreting events. A central tenet of revolutionary intercommunalism, for example, is that "contradiction is the ruling principle of the universe," that everything is in a constant state of transformation. Recognition of these principles gave Party leaders an ability to grow through a self-criticism that many other radical political organizations seemed to lack. Thus, in 1970, Newton could say of the Party:

> In 1966 we called our Party a Black Nationalist Party (BNP). We called ourselves Black Nationalists because we thought that nationhood was the answer. Shortly after that we decided that what was really needed was revolutionary nationalism. That is, nationalism plus socialism. After analyzing conditions a little more, we found that it was impractical and even contradictory. Therefore we went to a higher level of consciousness. We saw that in order to be free we had to

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Heartfelt thanks to Melvin Dickson and all the volunteers who have worked on *The Commemorator* issue after issue, to the brothers and sisters who have planned our reunions year after year, and to the Black Panther Party members and community workers who have given a lifetime of dedication to the continuing struggle for freedom and justice.

... Mary Mattson Elieisar

Ruling by Third Circuit Court of Appeals Favors Abu-Jamal

By Linn Washington Jr.

Editor's Note: On July 8, 2011, the District Attorney's Office in Philadelphia, PA filed a petition for certiorari *review to the United States Supreme Court in an effort to overturn the second determination of the Third Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals striking down Mumia Abù-Jamal's death sentence. Mumia is being defended by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. At the Supreme Court, three things could happen:* certiorari *could be denied, leaving the Third Circuit's order unchanged;* certiorari *could be granted and the lower court's order affirmed; or* certiorari *could be granted and the order reversed and the case once again remanded for further proceedings.*

The federal Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia issued a ruling on Tuesday, April 26 upholding its earlier decision backing a new sentencing hearing ordered by a federal district court judge back in 2001, in the controversial case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, convicted of the killing of Philadelphia Police Officer Daniel Faulkner.

The Third Circuit found that the death penalty instructions provided to the jury, and a flawed jury ballot document used during Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial, had been unclear.

The U.S. Supreme Court had ordered the Third Circuit to re-examine its 2009 ruling upholding the lifting of Abu-Jamal's death sentence.

The Third Circuit's ruling, if left standing, requires Philadelphia prosecutors to call for a whole new sentencing hearing if they want to try and reinstate the death penalty. That would require impaneling a new jury to hear and consider evidence regarding mitigating circumstances and aggravating circumstances in the case, and then to decide for either execution or life-without-possibility of parole — the only two options legally available. Abu-Jamal has exhausted his avenues of appeal of his conviction, absent new evidence in the case.

If prosecutors opted against holding a new hearing, then Abu-Jamal's sentence would be converted automatically to a life sentence, which in Pennsylvania means no chance of parole. Abu-Jamal would have to spending the remainder of his life behind bars, though not on death row.

Experts contend a new sentencing hearing would be problematic for prosecutors. Although the issue of guilt or innocence would not be on trial, the defense could bring in witnesses to explain exactly what they saw happen the night of the shooting — witnesses whose testimony could ultimately raise new questions about the validity of the underlying conviction.

In August, the Philadelphia District Attorney filed a petition for Writ of Certiorari to the United States Supreme Court. Furthermore, prosecutors concede that current and yet unresolved legal issues in this case, which continues to attract unprecedented international scrutiny, will keep it in courts for years. For example, there are several avenues of appeal of Abu-Jamal's death sentence which were never adjudicated by the Federal District court, which mooted them after the Judge, William Yohn, found in favor of one argument and tossed out the death sentence.

In early April 2011 the NAACP Legal Defense Fund publicly announced it was joining the Abu-Jamal defense team and working with Professor Ritter. NAACP lawyers had joined Ritter last fall during the hearing where she argued the legal point just upheld by the Third Circuit in its latest ruling.

Recently Abu-Jamal recorded yet another birthday (4/24) inside a death row isolation cell. Abu-Jamal and the 222 other Pennsylvania death row inmates spend 23-hours per day every day isolated inside minimalist cells.

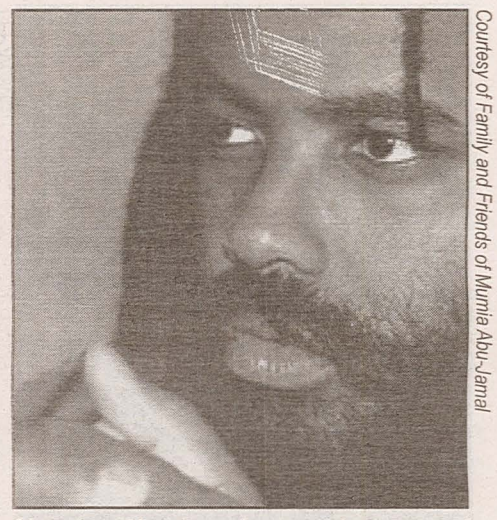
Since 1983 Abu-Jamal has languished in the confinement of death row, following his controversial July 1982 conviction for the murder of Officer Faulkner.

Now 57, Abu-Jamal has spent nearly 29 years of his life in prison for a crime he has consistently denied committing — a crime that ample evidence conclusively proves could not have occurred as police and prosecutors have proclaimed.

Authorities, for example, claim Abu-Jamal fired four shots at the policeman, while straddling the officer as he lay defenseless on a sidewalk, striking him only once with a fatal shot in the face.

However, police crime scene photos and police reports make no reference to any bullet marks in that sidewalk around the fallen officer — marks that should have been clearly visible if Abu-Jamal fired three shots at almost point-blank range into the sidewalk as witnesses and the prosecutor claimed.

As detailed in a thorough investigative ballistic test released in September 2010 by This Can't Be Happening! it is impossible to fire high-velocity bullets into a sidewalk without leaving any marks. TCBH! test-fired each kind of .38-caliber bullets referenced in police reports about the 1981 crime scene into a slab of old city sidewalk, and each of those bullets left easily visible marks…marks totally contradicting claims by authorities that Abu-Jamal wildly fired into the sidewalk without leaving bullet marks.



Courtesy of Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal

Mumia Abu-Jamal, world-renowned journalist and political prisoner.

Rulings by federal and state courts denying Abu-Jamal the legal relief routinely granted other inmates who had raised the same appeals claims are the least-examined element of this internationally-condemned injustice.

The same Philadelphia and Pennsylvania courts that found major flaws by either defense attorneys, police, prosecutors and/or trial judges in 86 Philadelphia death penalty convictions during a 28-year period after Abu-Jamal's December 1981 arrest declare no errors exist anywhere in the Abu-Jamal case — an assertion critics call statistically improbable.

The federal Third Circuit, for example, declined to grant Abu-Jamal a new trial based on solid legal issues from racial discrimination by prosecutors in jury selection to documented errors by trial judge Albert Sabo, the late jurist who relished his infamous reputation for pro-prosecution bias.

The Third Circuit's 2008 ruling faulting Sabo for his inability to provide the jury with simple death penalty deliberation instructions included the contradictory conclusion that Sabo had adequately provided the jury with instructions about a highly complicated legal issue involving misconduct by the trial prosecutor.

Faulting Sabo for that flawed instruction on prosecutorial misconduct would have required the Third Circuit to give Abu-Jamal a whole new trial. Unwilling to do that, the court sidestepped its duty to ensure justice, by deciding to just eliminate Abu-Jamal's death sentence, instead.

All Power to the People!

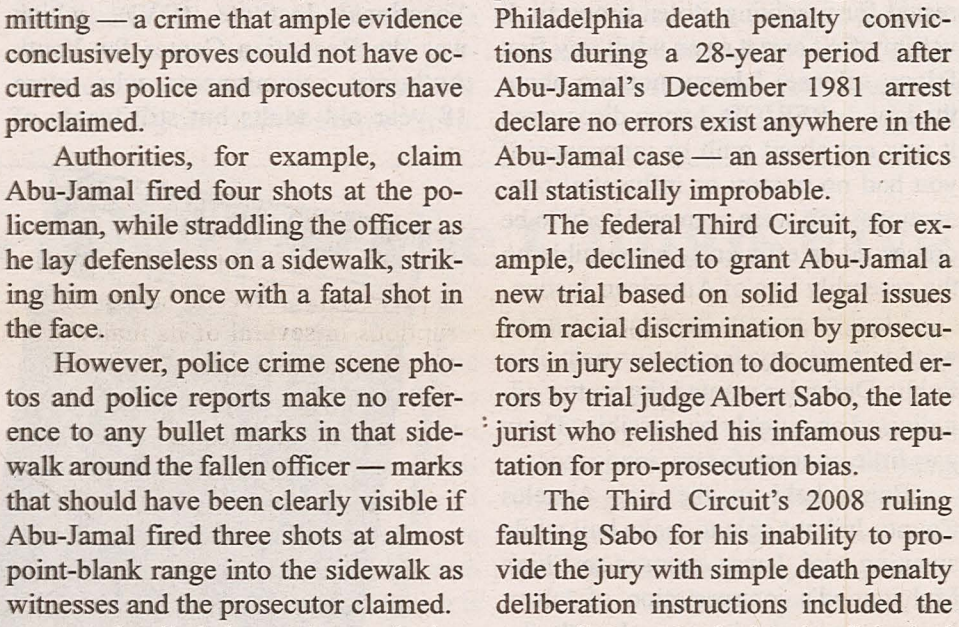
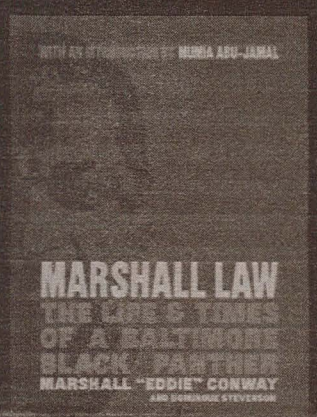


Photo by Hans Bennett

Mass protest has been a leading tactic demanding the end to the railroading of Mumia for the past 30 years.

MARSHALL LAW


WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY MUMIA ABU-JAMAL
MARSHALL LAW
THE LIFE & TIMES OF A BALTIMORE BLACK PANTHER
MARSHALL "EDDIE" CONWAY
AND DOMINIQUE STEVENSON

In 1970, the feds framed Eddie Conway for the murder of a Baltimore City Police officer. He was 24 years old. They threw him in prison, took him away from his family, his friends, and his organizing, and tried to relegate him to a life marked by nothing but legal appeals, riots and lockdowns, transfers from one penal colony to the next.

But they failed.

Forty years later, still incarcerated for a crime he didn't commit, Eddie Conway continues to resist.

MARSHALL LAW
THE LIFE & TIMES OF A
BALTIMORE BLACK PANTHER
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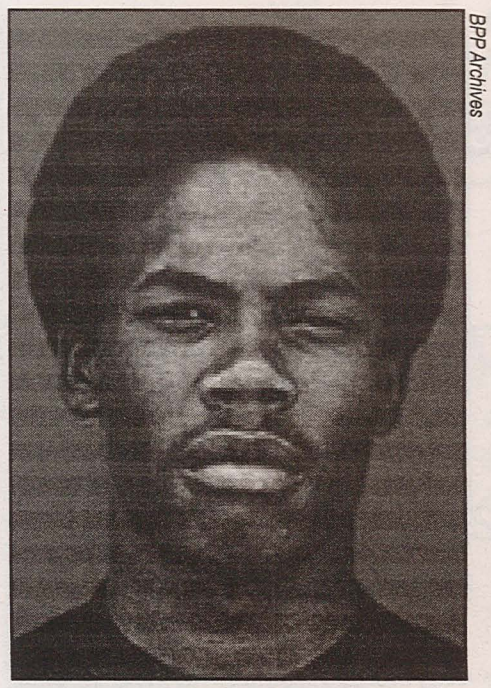
Reminiscences in the Struggle



BPP Archives

Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald is the longest held Black Panther political prisoner in the United States.

By Romaine "Chip" Fitzgerald, Part II

A few months after I turned 18, a neighborhood homeboy and I were arrested for receiving stolen property. It was my first arrest as an adult, my first felony offense. I knew nothing about the law — PERIOD. I soon discovered it was not about guilt or innocence; if you had no money or influential connections, you were seen as a body to be processed as efficiently as possible on the assembly line of American Justice.

I had no money for a lawyer and I wouldn't ask my family for help. My Public Defender wanted the matter adjudicated as quickly as possible. There was little concern for my innocence.

Being held in the Los Angeles County Jail not able to make bail while awaiting trial, I was exposed to Elijah Muhammad's interpretation of Islam. I was genuinely impressed with the Nation of Islam's glorification of the African history and civilization. I also read *The Autobiography Of Malcolm X*. I began to think seriously about becoming a Muslim. I also began to think perhaps all white people were really Devils with inherently evil natures, and it was beyond them to perform good deeds without ulterior motives or hidden agendas. The *Nation's* view of the world being dominated by white people was quite logical to me. I had never met a white person that I had embraced as a friend. With the exception of the police and others associated with the criminal justice system I knew only the few white people in the social infrastructure in Watts who were always hostile, acting as if they were under siege.

I'd witnessed the attack on my father by the LA Sheriff, and the brutalization and terror of many Blacks. Weren't greedy, white businessmen out to drain the wealth, resources and health of the ghetto? Weren't Blacks expected to be happy in their oppression and denial of basic constitutional protections and rights? Malcolm X characterized the conditions of Black oppression as "second class citizenship … for descendants of slaves!"

And now here was my white Public Defender collaborating with the DA's Office and the Judge to send me to prison. I was very bitter. The Black Muslims' teachings supplied me with appealing simplistic answers to my anger and situation. They emphasized Knowledge Of And Doing For Self And Kind; on Moral Responsibility; on Individual Integrity and Commitment To The Liberation of Black People.

I was held in pre-trial detention for several months and then I had a farce of a trial. After my two hour trial by transcript, I was found guilty of receiving stolen property by the judge, and re-committed to the California Youth Authority for final determination. Escorted back to the holding cell by the bailiff I was enraged by the proceedings. An older Brother — a veteran of many courtroom battles — told me that a trial by transcript was a less painful way to plead guilty. All of which had been orchestrated by the Public Defender. This experience of course, served to reinforce the teachings of the Nation of Islam.

I was delivered to the California Department of Corrections at the Duel Vocational Institute (DVI), which was the Reception Center for Youth Authority commitments who were 18 year old adults but still wards of the Juvenile Court system. The Youth Authority Parole Board gave me a nine-month program to serve. I was in Tracy for nearly two years, mostly in solitary confinement.

Prison was like a jungle filled with predators who constantly posed a threat to a Brother's well-being. The armed, racist guards located overhead posed a double threat. I walked slowly, kept quiet and vigilant while adopting the ways of my predatory environment in order to survive.

Black prisoners were primarily from California's urban centers. We had to deal with insensitive, white administrators and white convicts who stood with the prison guards in racist unity against us. White convicts seemed instinctively leery of us because our presence made them feel uneasy.

Having yet to make a break from negative behavior patterns of my immediate past, I mobbed up with some of my homeboys from the old neighborhood and we began to extort other prisoners for cigarettes and canteen. The correctional staff discovered our illicit activity and some of us were confined in segregation, isolated from the general prison population.

While in total isolation I had to confront who I was. I did not like myself and was determined to change. So began a period of critical introspection. I had read *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* while in the County Jail and I was still seriously considering converting to Islam. What prevented me from becoming a Muslim was the fact that I could not reconcile my identification with Malcolm X as a spiritual mentor with the Nation of Islam's depiction of him as a hypocrite and traitor. Also, despite the NOI's militant posturing their teachings opposed the principle of armed self-defense as a human right.

My transformation, from street thug and petty crook to servant and soldier for the liberation of Black people was underway. I read all the books and other materials I could get my hands on that related to the Black experience and Black Liberation, and to revolutionary politics. This was not very much. In those days any material promoting Black Nationalism and/or Anti-Capitalism was outlawed throughout the prison system. If a prisoner was found in possession of a *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper, he was locked up in isolation as a 'subversive and agitator'. But convicts are notorious for our ability to smuggle banned items into prison, and so it was during my months in isolation that I was first exposed to the Black Panther Party ideology and revolutionary materials calling for armed struggle against the U.S. government that sanctioned racism and exploited poor and working class people.

THE BLACK PANTHER
Black Community News Service
25 cents
THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY
INSIDE:
UMM UMM - IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT'S CHEAPER FOR THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO STARVE POOR PEOPLE THAN TO FEED US.

The Black Panther *issues from the early 1970s. The drawing on the right was by Emory Douglas, who was also the layout designer and art director of the publication. The caption reads, "Umm umm – it seems to me that it's cheaper for the U.S. government to starve poor people than to feed us."*

In the months that followed I was in a serious period of self-evaluation, and my view of myself and of society underwent a radical change. The crystallization of my political concepts did not happen in isolation from the ongoing civil rights struggle and escalating protests against the Vietnam War. Historically Black people suffered from horrific economic and political depredations. The Black Struggle against the historical oppression manifested itself in the form of the Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights effort reached its zenith during the mid-1960s without achieving fundamental change in conditions for Black people. Essentially, the Civil Rights Movement ended with the brutal assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr in 1968; catapulting the struggle of Black people to another level of struggle — the Black Liberation Movement.

Frustrated and desperate, a number of spontaneous, unorganized revolts and armed attacks erupted from the depths of the black ghettos of America's largest cities — with nothing to lose, there was everything to gain. The Black communities were seething with revolutionary aspirations for immediate and total social, political and economic liberation. So, thinking through the larger context of social and political action movements for equitable distribution of wealth, and for a people's right to self-determination, my political consciousness matured. These were the circumstances that lead me to join the Black Panther Party.

As I stated at the beginning, I joined the BPP immediately after my parole from DVI. The U.S. government was waging a war of repression against dissenters protesting the Vietnam War and the Radical Left in general, and the Black Panther Party in particular. There were constant attacks on the Panthers by government agencies and local police — our people were assassinated, imprisoned, forced into exile — but even with the ever present threat from the agents of repression, I remained true to my commitment to serve the People through the program created and implemented by the Party. I became involved in a number of Panther programs, particular the free breakfast program. We educated the people by concrete example, and through our practice. The U.S. government was seen as representing the interests of the avaricious capitalist, while failing to address the interest of Black and working class people. The Panthers worked to meet the basic desires and needs of the oppressed community.

Serving the people of my community, I had found my calling. *Point Two of the Ten-Point Platform and Program: We Want An End To Robbery By The Capitalist Of The Black Community.* The Free Breakfast for Children Program was a socialist program designed to serve the People and to be a concrete example of what the People can do for themselves. Getting up each morning to cook for and feed hungry children,

Continued on page 20

ARISTIDE STANDS; THE PEOPLE STAND

By Nia Imara
Haiti Action Committee
(www.haitisolidarity.net)

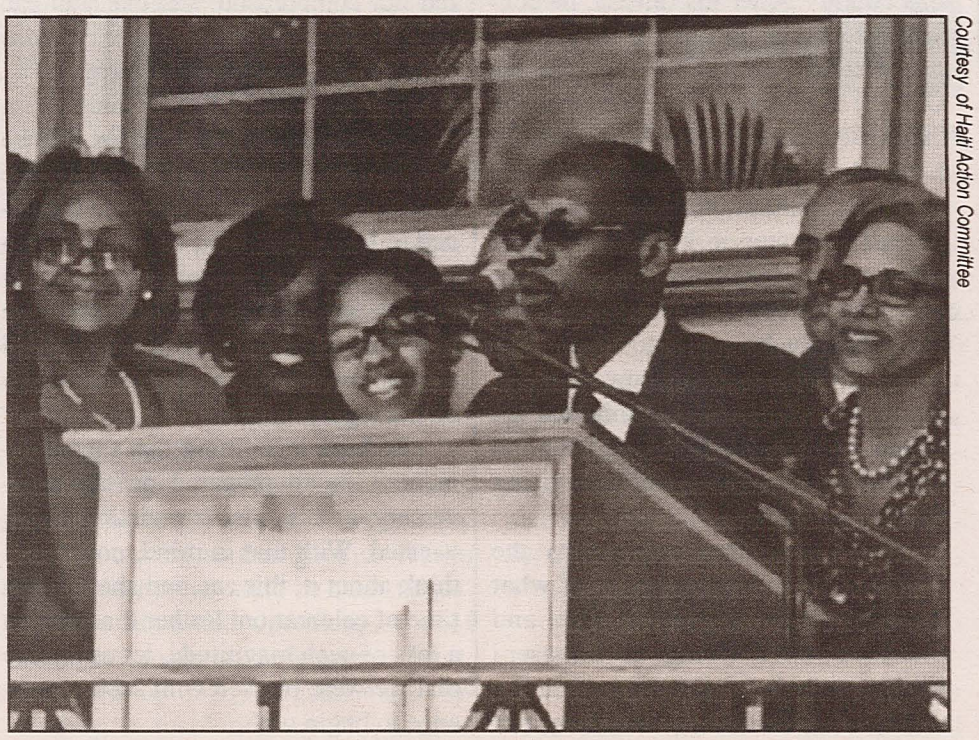
With President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's return to Haiti this past March, President Obama once again landed his administration on the wrong side of history. After seven years of forced exile in South Africa — an exile orchestrated and imposed by the United States — Aristide and his family returned home to the rejoicing of millions of their fellow citizens. Tens of thousands of supporters greeted the Aristides at the Port-Au-Prince International Airport on the morning of Friday, March 18 and ushered them to their home in Tabarre. The grounds surrounding the house, from which the Aristides were kidnapped seven years ago by U.S. Special Forces, were packed that morning with a jubilant crowd that included international supporters.

Background to Aristide's Ouster

In the predawn hours on Sunday, February 29, 2004, United States Special Forces and more than two dozen U.S. soldiers came to President Aristide's home, ordered him and his wife to get into a car, drove them to the airport, and put them onto an American plane that eventually landed in the Central African Republic. Ever since his kidnapping, the Haitian people that overwhelmingly elected him into office in 1990 and 2000 called for his return. Yet instead of respecting the will of the majority and offering support that might have expedited the return of Haiti's twice democratically elected president, Obama followed in the path of the Bush administration and took measures to stop Aristide's return from South Africa. In the last days leading up to the planned return, U.S. State Department officials repeatedly pressured the South African government to prevent him from leaving the country. And just a few days before the family left for Haiti, Obama personally called South African President Jacob Zuma to express his "concern" over Aristide's return.

Election History

The United States' centuries-long bullying of Haiti, its pressuring of Haiti, and its economic and military interference in Haiti have not ceased with the Obama administration. The ostensible presidential elections held in Haiti last November were fraudulent and undemocratic from the inside out. To start, Haiti's Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) prevented the country's most popular political party, Fanmi Lavalas, from running candidates. Ever since the senatorial elections in April 2009, in fact, Lavalas has been banned from participating in elections, due in no small part to pressure exerted on the CEP and the UN by Washington. In spite of demands made by the Haitian grassroots and the international solidarity movement that the United Nations, the CEP, and the U.S. not support elections in which Lavalas was excluded, "selections" be annulled and they protested the ongoing occupation of their country by the United States, France, Canada, and the United Nations. With hundreds of thousands still homeless since the earthquake, and in the midst of a cholera epidemic brought to the country by UN forces, how could such a farcical election be given priority over the needs of the people? How can there be democracy when a people are under military occupation? How can people participate in the rebuilding of their country when the movement



Courtesy of Haiti Action Committee

The return of President Aristide to his home in Haiti after spending six years in forced exile by the reactionary forces headed by the United States.

the Obama administration spent a total of $16 million to fund the elections in November and the runoffs in March.

On election day last November, voter fraud of every variety was documented: the names of registered voters went missing from polling stations, ballots were stuffed with the names of victims who died in the January 2010 earthquake, votes were miscounted or not counted at all, and there were only about 2,000 polling stations across the country, down from 12,000 during the last elections in which Lavalas participated. That the elections were fraudulent, however, could not have come as a surprise to Washington, the UN, or the CEP, who were forewarned by Haitian and international organizations.

Immediately following the November elections, Haitians came out onto the streets by the tens of thousands to vote with their feet and their voices. They demanded that the representing the majority is excluded and repressed? The contradictions can only be pushed so far. The crimes committed against the Haitian people by Washington, the United Nations, and by the elite within their own country do not go unnoticed.

The "impartiality" with which the American media treated the return of Jean-Claude Duvalier to Haiti last January was cynical, if not immoral. Tens of thousands of people were murdered during the 29 year-long, U.S.-funded dictatorship of Francois Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude. The severe economic divide in Haiti today and the country's dependence on foreign resources directly extend from the exploitation and corruption that that regime tried to entrench in society.

Rise of Popular Resistance

In 1986, Duvalier the younger was forced out of Haiti due to the mounting pressure of the people's resistance. The driving force of this movement came to be known as Lavalas. This Creole term means "flood" or "torrent," the idea being that the people were united in a cleansing flood that would wash away all the corruption and injustice of Duvalierism.

In the early 1980s, a young priest whose parish was in La Saline — an especially impoverished area in Port-au-Prince — emerged as a courageous opponent of Duvalier, Duvalierism, and the policy of the U.S. government, which had provided the dictatorship with millions of dollars over the decades. He was guided by liberation theology; he worked on behalf of the poor, the youth, and political prisoners; and he spoke about the right of Haitians to be free from foreign interference. Jean-Bertrand Aristide shared in the suffering of the people and uncompromisingly fought for a society in which dignity, education, shelter, healthcare and jobs were not the rights of a privileged few. He mirrored the aspirations of Lavalas — its slogan was "justice, transparency, participation" — and at the people's urging, he became the party's presidential candidate. In 1990, during the first democratic election in Haiti's history, the people elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide by an overwhelming 67% of the vote.

Although Duvalier was removed from power, the small, very powerful, and very rich elite that supported him remained intact. Aristide was, and is, so loved by his people because he stands for everything the Haitian elite, America, and France — Haiti's former colonizer — are against. Seven months after he assumed office, the Haitian military — which had been trained and funded by the U.S. — staged a coup d'état, and Aristide was forced into exile. Anti-Lavalas forces took over the government and, in their attempt to maintain power, reassumed their repressive Duvalierist tactics.

Meanwhile, Bill Clinton tried to manipulate the situation to the advantage of U.S. big business by trying to pressure Aristide into making a number of unacceptable concessions. If Aristide agreed to privatize his country's national resources — including the airport, banks, the telephone company and the electrical company — and sell them primarily to American corporations, then Washington would sanction Aristide's return and provide him with the protection of the U.S. military. But Aristide

Continued on page 15

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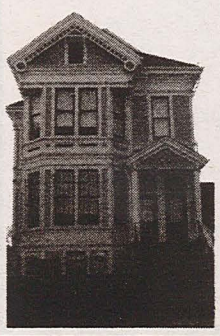

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Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt)
September 13, 1947 – June 3, 2011

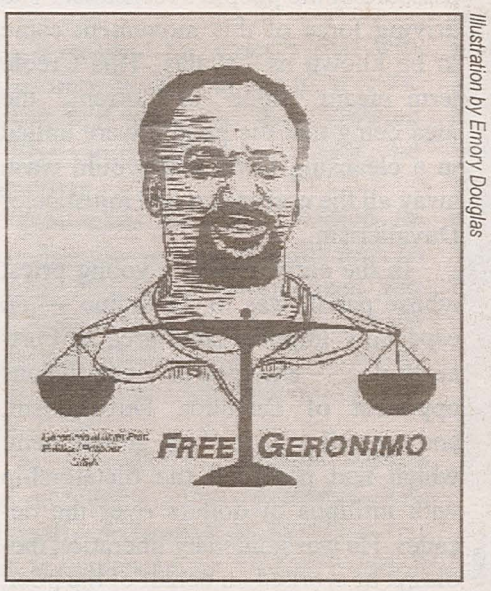

Illustration by Emory Douglas

By Gail Shaw

Geronimo grew up in Morgan City, LA, southwest of New Orleans. He was the youngest of 7 children. Although he grew up experiencing segregation and Klan violence, he loved the bayou country. After his release from prison he would split his time between his homes in Morgan City and Imbaseni village, Tanzania. At home in Morgan City, he enjoyed being out on his boat and exploring the waterways.

Geronimo was a highly decorated Vietnam vet who served two tours of duty. After returning to the U.S., he enrolled at UCLA. It was there that he met Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and became involved with the Black Panther Party. He assumed a leadership position after Bunchy and John Huggins were killed in 1969. He traveled extensively and helped to set up many other chapters, especially in the south. His military expertise was crucial in fortifying the LA office. When raided by the SWAT team in Dec. 1969, the comrades were so well trained that they were able to hold their own during a 4 hour shootout and no one was killed. This allowed enough time for the community to come out in mass and force the police to back down. The Panthers then safely surrendered and 18 of them were arrested on various conspiracy charges. After a lengthy trial, they were all acquitted.

Geronimo had become a target of the FBI' s "COINTELPRO" counterintelligence program. He was felt to be a particular threat due to his military skills, organizing abilities and strength of character. After the acquittal in the shootout case, the FBI and LAPD needed another way to get him off the streets and charged him with a 2-year old unsolved murder. There was wiretap evidence that he was in Oakland at the time of this Santa Monica murder, but the tapes would disappear.

Geronimo was convicted in 1972 and would spend 27 years in prison, eight of them in solitary.

Geronimo never stopped fighting. He maintained his dignity and stood by his principles despite the torture of the U.S. penitentiary system. Although he probably could have gotten out of prison much sooner, he refused to express remorse for something he did not do and would not compromise with the parole board. Eventually, through the long, hard, diligent work of his attorneys and the Freedom of Information Act, he was able to show that the prime witness against him had been a paid informant and had denied it repeatedly on the stand. He was granted an evidentiary hearing and his conviction was overturned. He was released on June 10, 1997.

Geronimo would later receive a $4.5 million settlement from the FBI and the LA District Attorney's office for false imprisonment. He became a symbol of the vicious injustices visited upon politically progressive people in this country. After his release, he continued to speak up for and support the many other political prisoners in the U.S. He used his settlement to start the "Kuji Foundation" which he used as a vehicle to continue the work of empowering communities. He supported several programs in his hometown of Morgan City, Louisiana. He also demonstrated his commitment to Pan African solidarity by going to Ghana and working with cassava growers there. He then traveled to Tanzania and reunited with former Panthers Pete and Charlotte O'Neal who had been living there since 1972.

Geronimo often referred to the O'Neals as the best example of what it meant to be a Panther. Pete and Charlotte were living in Imbaseni Village outside of Arusha and on the slopes of Mt. Meru, where they run the United African Alliance Community Center (UAACC). Two other former Panthers in Tanzania, Bill and Jimmy Whitfield, embraced his return and gave him a plot of land where he built himself a home. Ironically, the view from his yard of Mt. Meru was similar to pictures of the same mountain that he had on the wall of his cell at San Quentin.

Geronimo worked closely with UAACC to address areas of vital concern to the local community. He funded a water project to dig a borehole in the village that serves dozens of families daily. Women who used to have to walk miles for a bucket of water can now access clean water from a spigot in the village. The Kuji Foundation and UAACC also co-sponsored a solar project, working with local youth, and oversaw the installation of solar panels in nearly 100 homes for families that had never had electricity.

Most people in Tanzania didn't know about the Black Panthers or about the 27 years spent in prison, but when he rode through Arusha, people called out from shops and street corners — "Jaga." Geronimo had an impact wherever he went, never selfish with his smile or encouraging words. He was quick to lecture the kids on the corner about going to school, and then buy fruit from a local vendor so that they could all have a snack.

Despite the hardships he endured, he continued to set an example as a true revolutionary who continued to live by his principles and serve the people. He was always humble and gracious in his spirit.

He will be truly missed, but his spirit will always live on.

All Power to the People!

Leonard Peltier Remembers

Continued from page 3

of his freedom and the lives of his wife and unborn child could not break him. All the lies and injustice they could muster could not subdue such greatness. The combined resources of the FBI, Los Angeles police, and the L.A. District Attorney's office couldn't defeat him. What those in power did not understand was that Geronimo jiJaga Pratt was no ordinary man. He was a giant among men and remained focused during the most trying times. What they did not comprehend was that you can jail the warrior but not his ideas, not his strength, nor his effect on others.

No one would have blamed him if, after twenty-seven years in jail, he wanted to live a private life and age gracefully. True to his nature he continued to be a light in the darkness, fighting for human rights until his death. He gave everything to the issues which he held most dear. In doing so, he inspired generations of young people who carry on his legacy.

Perhaps it is fitting that this statement is being prepared on the anniversary of his false conviction being vacated. With that in mind, now that I think about it, this can and should be a time of celebration. Rather than mourn a loss of such magnitude, let us rejoice that we were blessed with such a presence to begin with.

The history of mankind is not written by corrupt governments or their shadow agencies, it is formed by greatness of spirit and strength of mind. This is why Elmer "Geronimo" Pratt will always be remembered and honored as a prophet and perhaps even a saint to his people. I know wherever he is, he is speaking truth to power, and rallying spirits to his cause.

This was not a spark that died! He was a fuse, igniting a series of events that we have yet to fully understand. I am certain in the fullness of time he will be celebrated while those who opposed him and their descendants will hang their heads in shame. It is this knowledge that makes me smile, and weep tears of great appreciation. So raise your hands, raise your hearts, raise your voices. Give thanks to Wankan Tanka that such a Titan walked amongst us. Never forget this incendiary spirit that opened minds and knocked down walls. Say his name with reverence, for he represents the very best of us all, and in that he will live forever.

In the Spirit of Crazy Horse,
Doksha,
Leonard Peltier
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Geronimo's Tribute

Continued from page 3

a thousand others. That has to be resolved. They are soldiers; all have put themselves on the line.

"If you see them erecting those prisons, those institutions, in your community, you fight against it like Angela did, or with the new Soledad. You fight against stuff like that because their villainy is to put your daddy, your mama, your uncle and you in there, and then they're going to hire your cousins to be the guards.

"Fred Hampton used to say, 'You can kill a revolutionary but you can't kill the revolution…' You have got to have faith in that we have not lost anything; we're suffering from setbacks, but we are going to continue, and we are going to continue until we liberate ourselves from this domination, and this is what the Black Panther Party was based on. A lot of people deviate from that, but that is part of what we fought and gave our lives for. The recent liberation of and creation of one of the strongest new African nations in the world, the Congo, is part of this struggle. To govern ourselves we fought for and are fighting for self-determination, to raise our own institutions, to create our own schools, not to be dependent on any other government, but our own. This is what we fought for and this is in the Ten-Point Program.

"I want all y'all who are running these poverty programs to know that we never accepted a dollar from the government. They offered us millions and millions. I was bothered with it… they can verify that, we did not accept a dollar from the government. Y'all who accepted those monies from the federal government, you've got to watch what you're doing because they don't give up nothing without strings attached to them. We've got to liberate our community.

"This is how they did it to these youngsters that y'all talkin' about y'all hate. You can't blame these youngsters, they'd come to the pen with the 30 to life, 25 to life, saying, 'Geronimo, man, I'm washed up,' at 21 years old, 19 years old. Yet people are saying something like, 'That's good for 'em. Send them to the pen, take the stand on them.' Don't do that. Those are our youngsters. Those are our younger generation. Listen to what Tupac was trying to say. We can't give up on our youngsters. Those youngsters are being manipulated by the same people that tried to manipulate the Black Panther Party.

"I want everybody to know I come from Louisiana, I come from the old forces fighting the Ku Klux Klan in Louisiana. We're going to talk about this, we're going to talk about ourselves because people associate me so much with just this one organization. I think it's time to clear the air.

"I belonged to the Central Committee of the Black Panther Party, but essentially I was not a Black Panther. I came from the southern forces. We came to help teach the Panthers how to defend themselves, to help with the first campaign of the Black Panther Party Central Committee. You all should understand that; it's not about the name, it's about liberation. It's not about who's a Panther and who wasn't, it's about who is participating to win us our freedom. It's not about a goddamned personality, it's about principles… We're talking about the liberation of all our people.

We don't want no personalities made. Like Mumia, we gotta stop that — we can't let them kill more of our soldiers…

[This] is a beautiful gathering and it reminds me of the '60's when Bobby, David and Huey and everybody were speaking, but I still feel that there is something I don't like. Now, I know that you have all heard that the Black Panthers' Archives were sold to Stanford, and that's a damn shame, if that's true. Can't nobody sell no Panthers' nothing because don't nobody own the Panthers but the people… We got to learn from what COINTELPRO did, if we don't learn what COINTELPRO did, we will continue to send our youngsters to prison and wash our hands of them, because that's the same program that is continuing today…

"We have to conquer the fear of freedom. That fear consists of us scared of getting away from the system… When our ancestors were so-called emancipated, after the Civil War, the reason why so many newly freed slaves were hesitant to leave the plantation, because of a fear of freedom. Freedom brings you a lot of responsibility, you see, so many of us have become so programmed and so used to leaning on 'old massa,' that when I come and tell you, 'Come on, you can lean on me; we are going down this road,' you are afraid to let 'old massa' go. You've got to let him go. You've got to stand on your own two feet…

"As I said, I'm from Louisiana where they have the Chapatooluus, Capalayus, the Wild Magnolias. I did further study that those native nations came to the aid of the slave as he was escaping from the plantation, and without their aid we would not have been able to get away from the plantation. They would help hide our ancestors, so we give all thanks and all praises to the native peoples. Natives are our comrades. Leonard Peltier is our comrade. Leonard is our shining prince. Organize! 'Free Leonard!' Sure, free Leonard. We all did time together. They all know me. They know what I'm going to do, and they ain't worrying about it. Like I tell everybody, don't come to me about making me no movie star — about giving me no Cadillac, no women, no shining clothes, no dope. I don't want nothing but to free this nation…

"We were one of the most important institutions in the movement; but there's been too much given to the Black Panther Party that was not true. We had moves led by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that were attributed by the media to the Panthers or as Panther-motivated. We had moves initiated by the Nation of Islam — they just stereotyped on that, and by us not controlling our own reality, our own history books, it goes down in history as Black Panthers. It's not true. Black Panthers was a very important program. By no means was the Black Panther Party the most significant factor. I want you to understand that. You had so many organizations. They wrote the history. They elevated the Panthers to what they wanted to in order to contain the Panthers. We need to control our own history. We've got to raise the organizations that lie in the ashes…

Courtesy of Family and Friends of Geronimo

Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt)'s son Hiroji Pratt in his hometown of Morgan City, LA, accepting a U.S. flag of "honor" from a representative of Vietnam Veterans for his father's service in the Vietnam War.

"People have been deceived. They might come for your sister; they might come for your brother. Their object is to get you to fight each other, to kill each other, so they can go on with their schemes, manipulating us, and exploiting us. You've got a thousand prisoners walking around; over half of them are in there for murder. You got 20 guards and over 1,000 prisoners. The only way that 20 can control a thousand is through divide and conquer, saying, 'This guy is a rat. This guy is this. This guy is that.'

"So I'm very familiar with rules and stuff. You better be careful about what you hear, and what you pass on. Don't pass on information that comes from the police. Only pass on information that fosters unity. If it doesn't bring unity, don't say nothing about it.

"You have been misguided to think our enemy is the white man. Don't look at it like that. You analyze situations, and you have to know who your enemy is, if you don't want to be killing the wrong people. You hear about the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman. Harriet Tubman did not start the Underground Railroad, white people did that. Levi Colbert was a white man, Fairbanks, another man named Long. Long did 18 years in Kentucky before the Civil War. Eighteen years… all he had to do was to tell them where he snuck the slaves off to, but he wouldn't snitch. This is in the history books, in the archives, and they were as white as you can get.

John Brown, I know y'all know about John Brown. I don't have to tell y'all about that. So many white revolutionaries, who don't trip, who've been doing time, and never snitched on nobody; whereas you got people blacker than that T-shirt that brother got on, who snitch out of both sides of their mouth. You have to understand who the enemy is. Quit being confused. We have white comrades, we have native comrades, we have brown comrades, and we have comrades from all parts of the battlefield. A lot of them are more soldierly and more sincere than a lot of people you know. So give that some consideration. It's about understanding our history…quit giving so much praise to the Negro bourgeois.

Study history. It continues through Black militants. It does not continue through a bourgeois trend that teaches us that our history started in 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia. That's not true. Our history is what was called a Diaspora. Our history started with people like Ruchell McGee, George Jackson, prisoners of war, who had been captured; who had been sold, who were brought here in 1526.

You have examples of over 100 prisoners of war, straight raw, being encamped in what is now called South Carolina. You have examples of this happening in this land. They drove the Spaniards out and remained here as one of the first permanent African settlements of the Diaspora. There's another settlement dating from 1530-31, almost another 100 years before Jamestown. Where are our Africans? Why are our Negro historians teaching that shit? I'll tell you why…They would rather submerge all that history; that is not our history. Our history begins with militant resistance."

To put these principles and lessons into action, and carry on the fight to victory, we need organization. That is why we built CCBPP and that is why we need your volunteer time now, more than ever.

Contact CCBPP today!

All Power to the People!

Li'l Bobby Hutton Day Guest Speaker, Lori Davis, Speaks of Son Raheim Brown, Murdered by Oakland Police

Photo Courtesy of East Bay

Lori Davis, the mother of Raheim Brown who was executed by the Oakland Unified School District Policeman Sgt. Barhin Bhatt with back-up Sgt. Jonathan Bellusa, holds photos of her late son after the murder.

> WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of color, and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces. — POINT 7, BPP TEN-POINT PROGRAM

By Commemorator Staff

On April 7, Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party, Family and Friends of Li'l Bobby Hutton and ItsAboutTimeBPP.com sponsored this year's annual Li'l Bobby Hutton Day. This event has been hosted over the past 12 years at the West Oakland Public Library. The program included family members and friends of Li'l Bobby who spoke about his contributions to the founding period of the Black Panther Party. People who knew Li'l Bobby testified on his exemplary practice as a member of the party.

This year's event also featured special guest speaker, Lori Davis, mother of the late 20-year old Raheim Brown, Jr. Both Brown and Li'l Bobby were from the black working class community, and were executed by an Oakland police officer. Ms. Davis recounted the facts of her son's murder at the event.

On January 22, Sgt. Barhin Bhatt with back-up Sgt. Jonathan Bellusa gunned down Raheim Brown Jr. outside of Skyline High School while on duty as Oakland School District police officers. Brown, who was unarmed, was fatally shot seven times inside the vehicle that he had been driving, including once in the chest and twice in the head.

A female passenger in the car, who was badly beaten by Sgt. Bhatt, reported that one of the officers used racial slurs before they murdered Brown. When the officers filed their report, they made an accusation that Brown had tried to stab one of the policemen with a screwdriver. This statement was used by the police to justify his murder.

Although petitions have been circulated by organizers demanding that the two officers be fired, the Oakland School Board has done little to rid the district of these police officers. Many activists against police brutality stated their belief that students and police officers have nothing in common, and they want alternatives for conflict resolution and security of community residents versus use of armed police.

This summer, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) Police Chief Peter Sarna resigned with all benefits after he was caught using racial slurs and being drunk on duty.

On August 4th, the following allegations were lodged in complaints filed by fellow officers against OUSD Chief Sarna. While driving back from an event at Sequoyah Country Club in Oakland with three other officers, Chief Sarna apparently began to rant. Turning to an African American officer, who lives in Orinda, Sarna said that he had no right to live in Orinda because he was a "n----r" and that "he should be hung in the town square" and that "he was the last n----r that he would ever hire." The story became public on August 15, and by August 17 Sarna had submitted a letter announcing his immediate retirement.

On the same day it became clear that Sarna was out, it was learned that Sgt. Barhin Bhatt had been promoted to replace him as interim chief of OUSD police. The decision to appoint Bhatt, made by OUSD superintendent Tony Smith with the backing of the board, outraged community members, especially since it had barely been a week since dozens of protesters had last rallied at the OUSD administration building calling for the firing of Barhin Bhatt and Jonathan Bellusa and for them to be charged with the murder of Raheim Brown. The move was perceived as a huge slap in the face to Brown's family, as well as supporters who have been fighting for justice since Brown was murdered on January 22.

It is beyond comprehension how Oakland students could possibly be expected to have any faith in a police force rocked by an ugly racist scandal at the very top, especially when the same man who put seven bullets into an unarmed Raheim Brown was appointed to lead the department. At an August 24 Oakland School Board meeting, local community members rallied to protest against police brutality in schools and to make clear that they were not going to accept the promotion of a killer policeman as chief of school district police — they do not want him around their children, period.

So far these protests have resulted in a delay in Bhatt's appointment. Protesters want police out of the public schools. Brown's family and organizers continue to rally and have noted that on August 26, Brown's son, Raheim Brown III, was born, never to meet his father.

All Power to the People!

EAST WIND BOOKS of BERKELEY

AOKI

AOKI is a documentary film chronicling the life of Richard Aoki (1938-2009), a third-generation Japanese American who became one of the founding members of the Black Panther Party. Filmed over the last five years of Richard's life, this documentary features extensive footage with Richard and exclusive interviews with comrades, friends, and former students. **($20 retail individual price)**

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Solidarity with Pelican Bay Hunger Strike

Editor's Note: On September 28, lawyers and mediators of Prison Hunger Strike Solidarity's mediation team confirmed that at least 6,000 prisoners in seven California state prison facilities have resumed their hunger strike.

On July 21 prisoners at the high-security Pelican Bay State Prison in Del Norte County, California, entered into an agreement with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to suspend their three-week long hunger strike in exchange for the CDCR's agreement to a major policy review of housing conditions at the Security Housing Unit (SHU) and of the gang validation and "debriefing" processes. That strike began on July 1 at Pelican Bay and quickly spread to include 6,600 inmates in 13 California prisons, becoming one of the largest prison strikes in California history. The CDCR also agreed to immediately allow SHU prisoners to have wall calendars, watch cap "beanies" (for warmth in cold weather) and to take correspondence courses (paid for by the prisoners) requiring proctored exams.

The inmates' representatives said they resumed the hunger strike to expose the CDCR's failure to act, as promised, on their five core demands:

1) Elimination of group punishments, where the actions of one inmate result in punishment of entire groups, often chosen on a racial basis.

2) Abolishment of "debriefings" to determine gang affiliations of fellow inmates, forcing inmates to become state's witnesses and pitting prisoners against each other in order to get out of isolation.

3) That California comply with the U.S. Commission on Safety and Abuse in Prisons' recommendation to abolish long-term solitary confinement. California has more than 3,200 prisoners in SHUs, some for over 30 years.

4) Adequate quantity and quality of nutritional food, in conformance with prison regulations.

5) Expansion of constructive programs for indefinite SHU inmates "to engage in self-help treatment, education, religious and other productive activities..." and privileges like a weekly phone call and warm clothing.

On August 31st, CDCR stated that inmates will be allowed handballs in the yard, to purchase sweat suits and, with one year without disciplinary action, permission to take a yearly photo and buy art pens and drawing paper in the prison canteen. However, as of September 26, the ten weeks of meetings with prison representatives had produced only vague promises of possible changes, with no dates for implementation.

In a September 27 memo to all 33 California prisons, the CDCR threatened disciplinary action against prisoners taking part in the strike including placement in Administrative Segregation and confiscation of canteen items they have purchased (including food). The CDCR also stated that it has sufficiently addressed the prisoners' demands and future hunger strikes would not be treated in the same fashion as the July strike.

On July 21, Granma *published the article in column one, below.*

The letter from Jabari Shaw in column three, below, describes how one individual showed his solidarity with the prisoners.

We need strong organization to stop the injustices and oppression faced by our brothers and sisters, in prison and out.

Contact CCBPP to see how you can help (510) 652-7170.

U.S. Prisoners Continue Hunger Strike

"We want to be treated like human beings"

[Reprinted from *Granma*]

DATELINE: Havana, July 21, 2011

Hundreds of prisoners incarcerated in California are on hunger strike to protest their isolation, torture and other abuse, but the news is barely being reported in a few local newspapers, alternative sources and personal web pages.

On July 1, 43 prisoners being held in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at the Pelican Bay maximum security penitentiary, close to the Oregon state border, began a hunger strike, which was immediately joined by prisoners in 12 other locations.

By July 4th, more than 6,600 prisoners were involved, a fact which the California Department of Corrections (CDCR) has attempted to minimize. After first saying that only a couple dozen prisoners were involved in the hunger strike, authorities were shortly thereafter forced to admit the magnitude of the event, according to their own records.

On July 15, Isaac Ontiveros, spokesperson for the Pelican Bay Hunger Strike Solidarity Coalition, announced that the CDCR had finally agreed to negotiate with leaders of the strike. Nevertheless, as this edition closes, no concrete offer has been made.

There have been no headlines, or even a broad condemnation on the part of the media in a country which has proclaimed itself the champion of human rights on a world scale and has therefore assumed the right to accuse others of violations.

The reasons motivating more than 800 prisoners willing to face the ultimate consequences of a hunger strike are astonishing. A cry of pain can be heard in one of their messages, "We want to be treated like human beings; we are not animals."

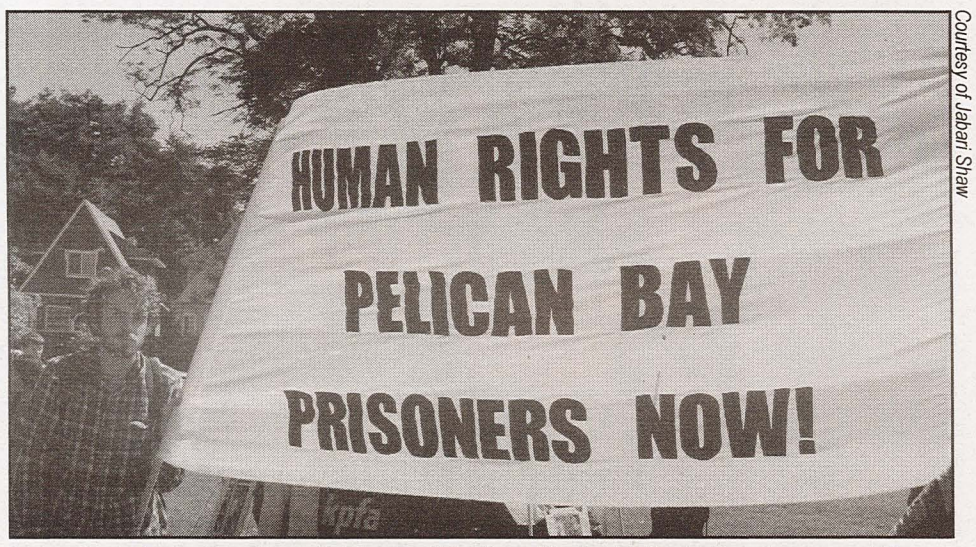
They are calling for the elimination of collective punishment, prolonged solitary confinement and the isolation of some prisoners for indefinite periods of time — 10 to 40 years, or more.

They are also demanding access to sunlight and health care.

Molly Porzig, spokesperson for California Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity, confirmed that the prisoners are denouncing the torturous and inhumane environment in which they are being held.

A report issued by legal experts in 2006 warned that prolonged solitary confinement, as it is practiced in U.S. jails, can produce "mental deterioration." The SHU leads to such deterioration. Also called "the hole," it is considered a prison within a prison composed of tiny cells with no

Continued on page 21



Courtesy of Jabari Shaw

Geronimo Day attendees display solidarity with the Pelican Bay hunger strike.

Courtesy of Jabari Shaw

Jabari Shaw (front and center) with Bay Area prison activist groups in solidarity with the Pelican Bay hunger strike.

Letter of Solidarity

Uhuru, Revolutionary love and solidarity!

My name is Jabari Shaw, previously known as inmate v96523. As a former inmate and targeted young black male I stand in solidarity with you courageous brothers, comrades and loved ones. I know my meager 14 months in San Quentin is not worth mentioning and my 26 days in the donor section hole overflow may sound like a joke compared to the mental / physical torture you have endured. I understand this and for that reason I have vowed to fast in support of the demands you bring forth. Today makes the ninth day of my fast. It has not been a full hunger strike but a daytime fast, similar to what our Muslim brothers do in the month of Ramadan from sunrise to sundown. I admit it has been tedious and some are worried that fasting along with my day-to-day duties will make me too weak to make progress but, today I tell you I feel stronger than ever.

People deal with many addictions in our community and some are inevitable, but by denying myself a basic necessity like food I believe I can resist the worst of temptations.

Day one of the fast, Friday July 1, 2011, we held a support rally in east Oakland on 71st and E. 14th Street, blocking traffic, waving signs, singing chants, and politically educating members of the community in the heart of the hood. We marched from 71st to 85th Ave. (or should I say Popeye's Chicken to J.J.'s Fish), while fasting. I led chants with a bullhorn along with other supporters then afterwards, marched through communities doing copwatch monitoring and passing out copies of the demands. This may have been the worst of the days because I knew there was no turning back.

Day two, I co-hosted a radio program which is located in a café that had good business that day, which intensified my cravings but I lasted and spoke out about the hunger strike.

Day three, we spoke at a BBQ with brew and all the trimmings on one of the hottest days this year. The sun didn't go down till 8:49 pm.

Day four, the 4th of July, only the thought of you making a complete fast got me through it. In what I thought to be just an act of solidarity/support I began to personalize the struggle and so I thank you. A lot of people I handed fliers to told me stories about friends and family members that have been in the SHU some from a mistake they made at 18 and now they are in their 50's. Some told their own personal stories of mistreatment and misconduct in prisons which I can relate to although there were some I had arguments with who don't believe in the power of this action but I believe because in December 2005 I actually participated in a strike where we only ate canteen food, not state-issued food, for a few days.

I admire your ambition and I salute you soldiers at Pelican Bay Penitentiary who have taken the frontline against the establishment. No movement is in vain if the people work collectively.

Comrade Jabari Shaw

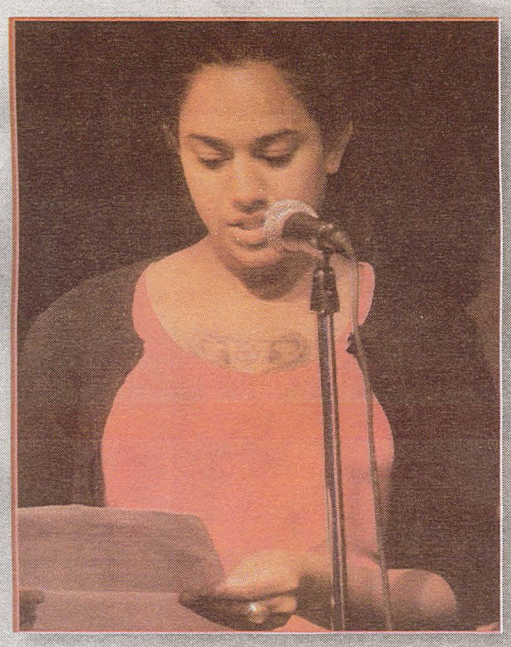
All Power to the People!

Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt) R

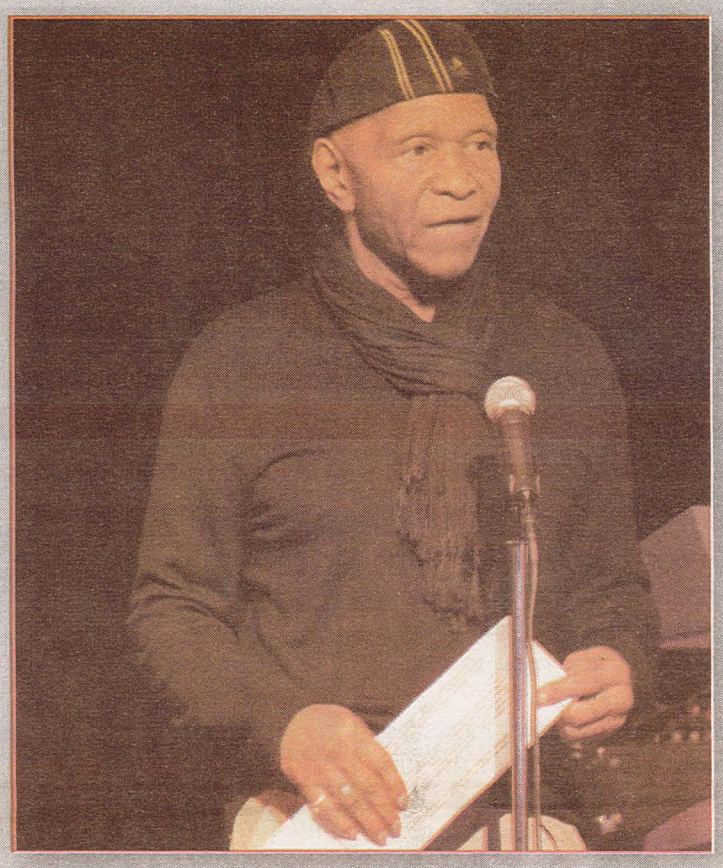
Eastside Arts Center: July 15

Speakers remember Geronimo

Niralli D'Costa (Bay Area Defense Committee for Eddie Conway)



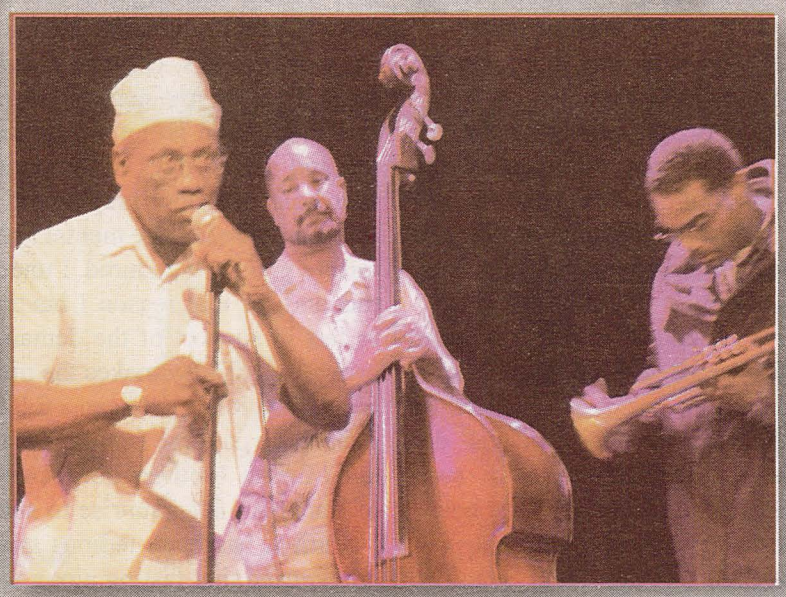
Robert King Wilkinson (ANGOLA-3)



Chester Jenkins (left) & Eseibio Halliday (right) (Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party)

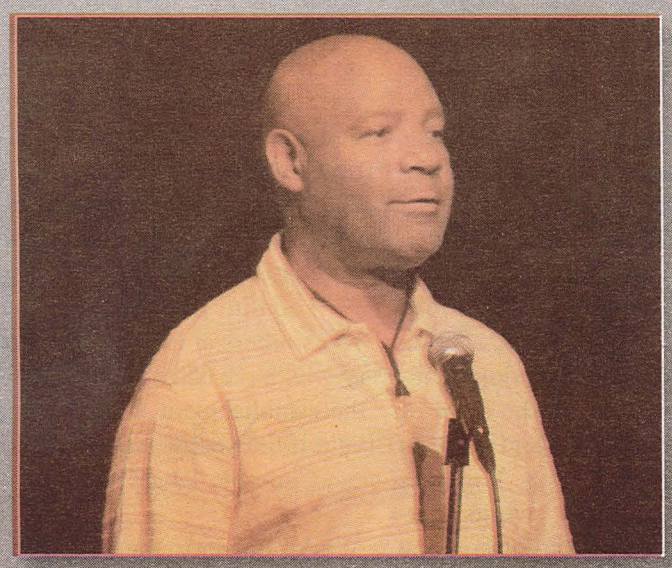
Avotcja (Poet Extraodinaire)

Nat Turner and UpSurge

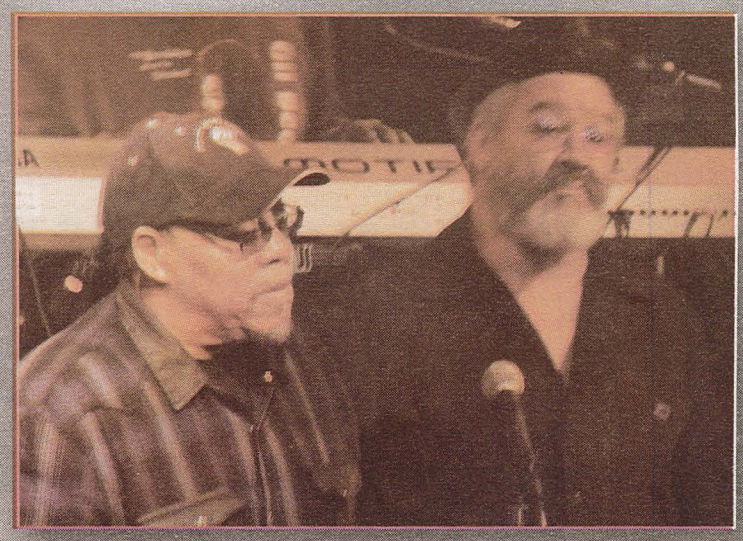


Lesley Tiyesha Phillips (Emcee, Organizer for Oscar Grant Committee)

Emory Douglas (Author, Revolutionary Artist)



Willie (Sundiata) Tate (left) and David Johnson (San Quentin Six) (right)



emembrance Celebrations

Bobby Hutton (DeFremery) Park: July 17

Ashaki Pratt, granddaughter of Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt) at her grandfather's Remembrance

Phavia Kujichagulia added to the celebration

Geronimo jiJaga is celebrated in Oakland by a diverse community on Sunday, July 17, 2011

Congresswoman Barbara Lee, 9th District, East Bay, CA

ALL PHOTOS BY ROBERT EMERSON

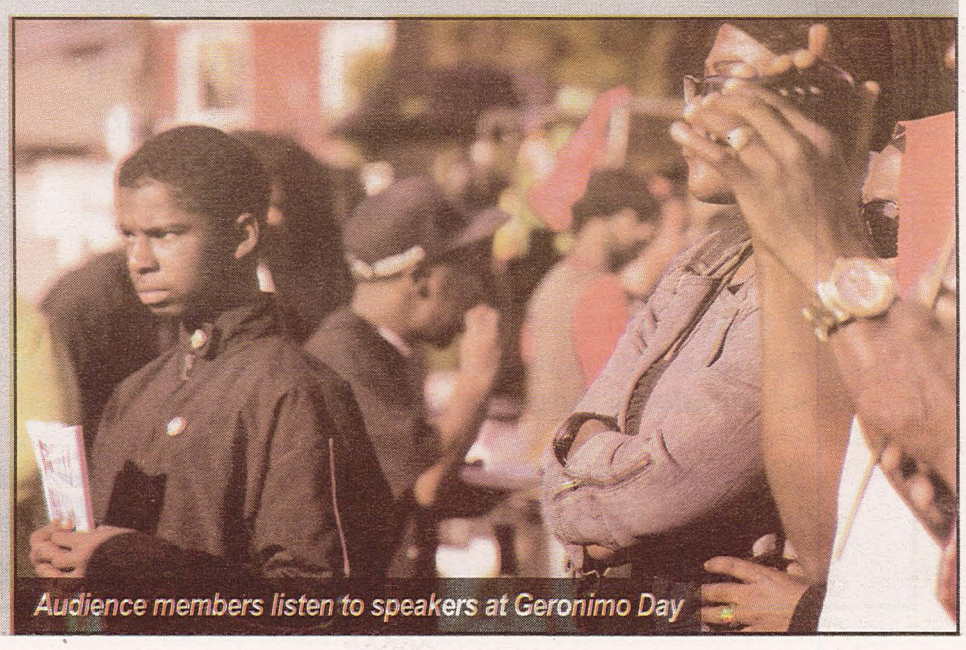
(Opposite Page) We kicked off the weekend commemorating **Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt)** on July 15 at the Eastside Arts Alliance, hosted by **Lesley Tiyesha Phillips** and **Emory Douglas**. Starting with videos on the Geronimo jiJaga case, the audience was reminded yet again of the case and the racist atrocity of Geronimo's 27-year imprisonment. Speeches, poetry, hip-hop and instruments graced the stage in spite of the grim reminders, ensuring a refreshing memorial.

Geronimo Day, July 17. Photos on this page highlight the celebration of Geronimo jiJaga. Both events were the collaboration of **CCBPP** and It's About Time, and this event brought together organizations such as All of Us or None and the Haiti Action Committee, to name a couple. Many notable individuals also attended including **Congresswoman Barbara Lee**, **Stuart Hanlon, Esq.** and **Cephus "Uncle Bobby" Johnson**. This was a lively event with the children, grandchildren and other family members of Geronimo also attending. It was the goal of the event to remember both the life and political legacy of this truly dedicated BPP/Class War Prisoner veteran.

Representative Lee (left) speaks with Stuart Hanlon (right), as Billy X Jennings looks on

Another goal of the event was to re-energize our movement and to not give up the fight by harvesting the revolutionary beauty that Geronimo helped to create throughout his 63 years of life in and out of the Party. The vibrancy of his message lives on as new generations step up and contribute to the movement's survival and growth. **Eseibio Halliday** of the CCBPP performed a special rap about Geronimo. Black Rider Liberation Party members performed their act with a sense of urgency. Poets **Avotcja** and **Marvin X** uttered wise invocations and African Drummers kept the crowd's feet on time. This is just a taste of how performers contributed to the commemoration of Brother Geronimo along with many political speeches that peppered the event. With so much sun, the beauty of the day matched the beauty of the participants.

Sounds from African drumbeats were a part of the festivities and ceremony


Audience members listen to speakers at Geronimo Day

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Aristide

Continued from page 7

refused, and due to the sustained resistance of the grassroots movement in Haiti, in combination with the mounting international support, he was able to return in 1994.

But Bill Clinton is back and is pursuing Washington's agenda of transforming Haiti into one of its markets. After the 2010 earthquake, Obama placed him and George W. Bush in charge of America's fundraising efforts for relief. Given Clinton's record with Haiti and considering that Bush's administration blocked $500 million in international loans to Haiti, Obama's decision must be regarded as rather cynical. Last year, the occupation government of Haiti made Clinton co-director of the Interim Reconstruction Committee. Soon afterward, his wife, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, brokered a deal in which a South Korean clothing company called Sae-A Trading would open sweatshops in Haiti.

When Aristide stepped down from office at the end of his first term in 1995, the people elected René Préval, who became the first president to serve his full five-year term in office. (Although after he was reelected in 2006, he betrayed the people by allying himself with the occupational forces.)

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Aristide was popularly elected president again in 2000, and again he faced attacks from the U.S., France and also Canada. These governments and the big business interests they represented did not want Aristide in office because he empowered his people, making it more difficult for them to be exploited.

Aristide's Program

President Aristide stands for education and literacy of the people. Between 1994 and 2004, the Lavalas administrations built hundreds of schools — 195 primary schools and 104 high schools — more than had ever been built in Haiti's history up to that point. (The U.S. and the UN have not built any schools during their seven-year occupation of Haiti.) The nationwide literacy campaign instituted by Lavalas reduced the rate of illiteracy from 85 to 55%, and in 2001 Aristide designated 20% of the national budget for education. Since his return to Haiti in 2011, Aristide again declared his intention to focus on education. As he has explained many times before, education and the day-to-day participation of people in the running of the country are the true tests of a democracy.

Aristide stands for economic justice. During his second term in office, he nearly doubled the minimum wage from 36 to 70 gourdes (about $1.70) per day. His administration also initiated a campaign to collect unpaid taxes that the elite owed the government. For decades, dictators did everything they could to economically and socially disenfranchise the masses. Lavalas empowered and enabled the people. Tens of thousands of fishermen were provided with assistance, new tools and boats, and 50 new lakes with stockfish were constructed. Lavalas built hundreds of new stores and restaurants at which food was sold at lower prices, thus challenging the monopolies of the elite. Moves like these, while they solidified Aristide's support amongst the poor majority, obviously increased the elite's animosity toward him and Lavalas.

Aristide stands for healthcare. Before the 2004 coup, Lavalas spent more on health care than any previous government. And during the ten-year period leading up to the coup, the malnutrition rate dropped from 63% to 51%. The administration began an AIDS treatment and prevention program; people were provided with free healthcare; forty clinics and hospitals were built or rebuilt; and clean water was being made accessible to the poorest parts of the country that up till then had been neglected. Eight hundred Cuban health care workers came to work in the traditionally underserved rural areas in Haiti, and over 300 Haitians went to Cuba to be trained as doctors. A new nursing school was also being planned, but the work was halted when the U.S. military appropriated it after the 2004 coup.

Above all, Aristide stands for the dignity of his people. And not just symbolically. During his first term in office, he disbanded the Haitian army, which was created by the United States during its first occupation of Haiti in 1915, and which was notorious for terrorizing the people. When he was elected for the second time, Aristide made it clear that France owed Haiti restitution for the $21.7 billion it extorted from the ex-slaves after the Haitian Revolution. (It is doubtful that the president of the United States would ever make moves to disband the police, the military, or to demand restitution for the descendants of slaves.) In making the demand for restitution, Aristide was speaking not only for the people of Haiti, but for black people everywhere who are descendants of slavery.

Coup and its Aftermath

At every turn, Aristide challenged the unjust power structure in Haiti and in the world — a power structure characterized by a privileged few profiting from the exploitation of the poor majority. Thus, in February 2004, the United States and a Haitian paramilitary consisting of Duvalierists and former army members violently took over the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The U.S. Marines occupied the country and were later replaced by the United Nations, which has since acted as a proxy military force for America, France, and Canada, whose mission has been to transform Haiti into a safe playground for big business. In order to do this, these governments have worked with the Haitian elite to crush the Lavalas movement. During the first months of the occupation, many Lavalas leaders fled the country because their lives were threatened by the coup-makers. In the years that followed, thousands of people were either murdered, disappeared, or imprisoned by the police, UN troops and paramilitaries acting on behalf of the rich. The casualties number in the thousands — men, women, children, the elderly.

The occupation put a halt to the reforms begun by Lavalas, and the quality of life has plunged dramatically during the last seven years. The elite and the de facto Haitian government have acted completely contrary to the most fundamental aspects of the Haitian constitution, which states, "The State recognizes the right of every citizen to decent housing, education, food, and social security." And in condoning Aristide's kidnapping and preventing his return to Haiti, Obama has violated the clause of the constitution that states, "No person of Haitian nationality may be deported or forced to leave the national territory for any reason."

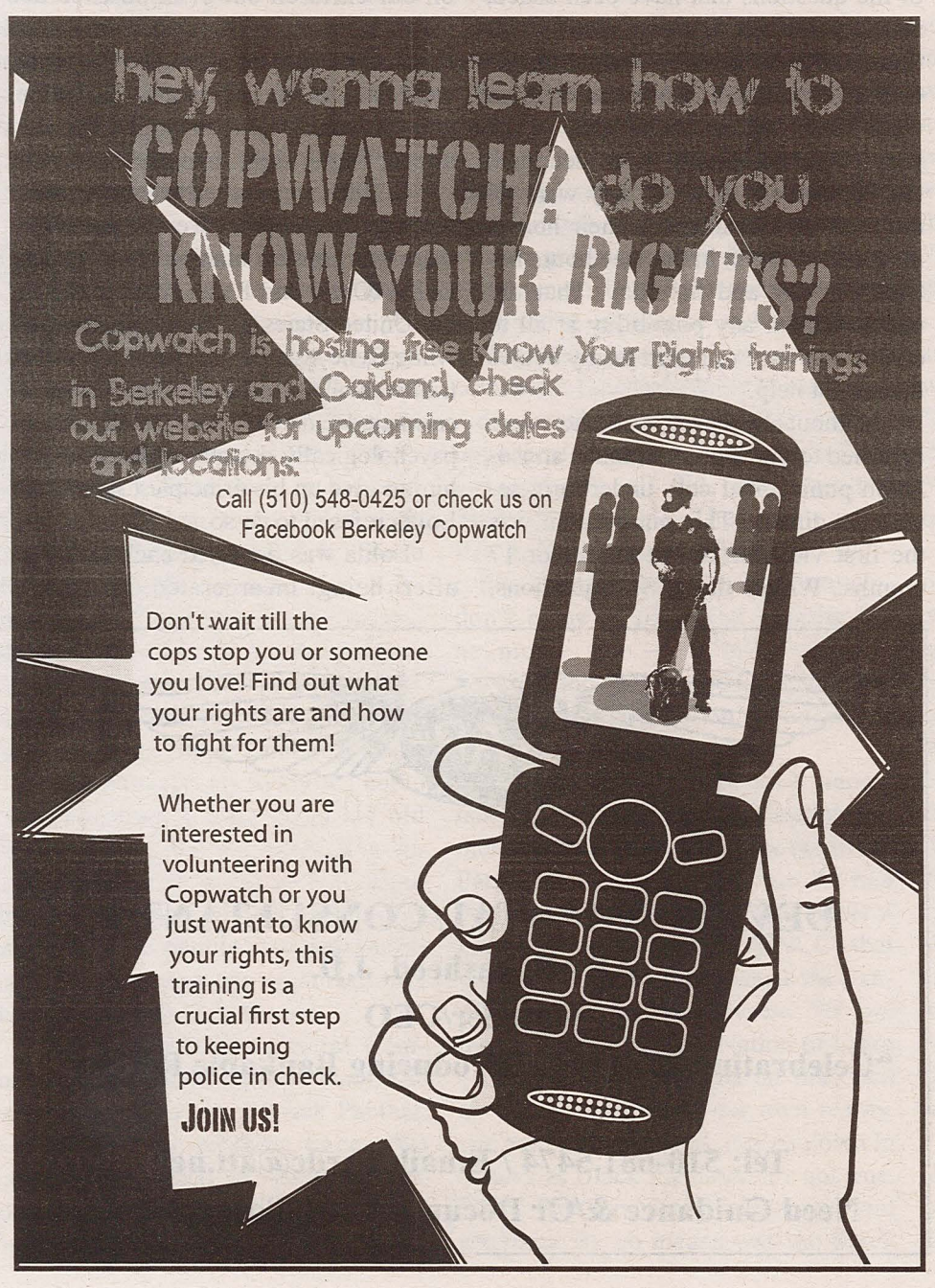
All along, the UN has protected the coup-makers and has itself participated in murder and rape. In 2006, the medical journal *The Lancet* published research showing that at least 8,000 Haitians had been murdered and 35,000 women raped since the coup, and the UN has participated in these crimes. Since its presence in Haiti, political repression has increased, the cost of living has skyrocketed, the infrastructure has deteriorated, and access to medical care, employment and education have plummeted. Many Haitians have compared this period to the Duvalier regime at its worst. The idea that the more than 10,000 UN troops in Haiti are there to bring about peace and stability is a myth. They are there to enable the occupation and provide it with a facade of legitimacy. The strategy of the U.S./UN occupation has been to re-enslave Haiti; and if the U.S. is the equivalent to the slave master in this affair, then the UN is equivalent to the overseer.

No Lie Lasts Forever

The veneer, however, is thin. The people of Haiti know well that the holding of elections should not be mistaken for democracy. The runoff held in March did not have a much higher voter turnout than did the November elections — between 10% and 25%. The CEP announced that the majority of the votes were taken by Michel Martelly, a man who supported the Duvalier regime and its death squads. But given the Haitian people's history of resisting corruption and repression, the story is not over yet. Neither truth nor justice can be evaded forever.

Indeed, the people persevere. In Haiti is a people born out of struggle — a people who have pledged their determination to die in struggle rath than live as slaves. The return of Aristide gives reason to hope and proves that their struggle has not been fruitless. If we stand with the people of Haiti, we stand on the right side of history.

All Power to the People!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Cuban Five

Continued from page 1

the U.S., use of weapons or property damage. None involved surveillance of the U.S. government. Yet Gerardo Hernández received a double-life sentence, which the courts have all refused to overturn or modify. The others received sentences from 30, down to 15 years — all for having sought to stop terrorists that the U.S. has been protecting, if not directly aiding and abetting.

The July 2010 presentation, moderated by ICAP Vice President Basilio Gutierrez, featured Mirta Rodríguez Pérez, mother of imprisoned Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez, and Olga "Lolita" Salanueva, wife of imprisoned René González Sehwerert, who told their stories to the gathered international audience, and called for aid in winning the freedom of the Cuban Five. *(References to years have been updated.)*

Basilio Gutierrez: One of the characteristics of this case is the silence that is being kept by the mass media in the United States. They re taking good care to make sure that the U.S. people do not get to know about this case of injustice. Because the U.S. government knows that once the U.S. people get the facts, then they will be ready to join the struggle.

That was demonstrated already in the Vietnam War, and even more recently when the child Elián Gonzales was kidnapped. There was overwhelming support from the people of the United States, and advocacy on the part of many of you here who participated in that effort. Likewise we want to tell you that we, here, are not going to tire in our fight for the freedom of the Cuban 5. We are going to keep up the struggle.

This case is marked by the U.S. government's unjust actions, which have obstructed the normal course of justice. We have this very peculiar situation where fighters against terrorism, those who were defending Cuba from the criminal actions of terrorists, those who were advocating for the people of the United States against terrorism, are now behind bars in separate prisons, serving long sentences.

And the true terrorists — Luis Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch — those who have sown misery in our homeland, are walking free down the streets of Miami.

The fact is that the people of the U.S. have, historically, joined struggles to make sure justice is done, and in this case not just for the sake of five innocent men, but they are also going to be struggling for their own peace in the United States as well. This is why we still have hope that the people of the United States will join this effort.

We cannot afford to miss the opportunity this morning to make sure the discussion with both Mirta and Olga focuses on the struggle that is required to bring our five heroes home.

The moderator then took several questions from the audience for the speakers to answer in their presentations. These questions included:

Photo By Banbose Shango

Olga "Lolita" Salanueva (left), Melvin Dickson, and Mirta Rodríguez Pérez (right) discussed the Cuban Five struggle for their release.

What are the violations that the U.S. government and the court system have committed against their own laws? What were the violations of the Cuban 5's rights; specifically, in Olga's case, the rights of families to keep their integrity?

Is there any sign that the more than 20,000 "You have the power to free the Cuban 5" postcards that people have sent to President Obama are making a difference? Have they had any impact?

What else can people in the U.S. do?

Mirta Rodríguez Pérez: Good morning, everyone! I am proud to bring you a morning of life and hope. After 12 years of this struggle, based on unjust imprisonment of our children, I believe that after having this conversation with you, you can help us through strengthening our hope, as we have come to realize that only by building and further strengthening solidarity will we be able to overcome all these obstacles to make sure that our children are returned.

That is why I am always moved, whenever I participate with a group like this one today, in which there are a large number of North American friends. The wall of silence of our struggle in the United States has not yet been broken, in spite of the huge efforts that have been made so far. The history of this struggle has taught us that we cannot give up trying to do something, not even for one day.

Each of us must pursue the opportunities we have, each country according to its own characteristics. We appreciate every effort in the broad solidarity movement that is growing ever stronger. Great efforts have been made by these movements trying to build ties in higher levels of various European parliaments, as well as with brilliant attorneys, intellectuals, celebrities and artists. Through that, the struggle has been greatly enlarged. But it is not enough, yet.

Violations Committed Against the Cuban Five and their Families

We will try to answer every one of the questions that have been asked, starting with the first one about violations that have been committed in the course of each year since our children were taken. We must go back to the year 1998, when they were detained. On September 12, 1998, they were simultaneously detained in their homes in Miami, Florida in the wee hours between Friday and Saturday. That did not give them any possibility at all to contact a lawyer or report to any bodies that might help.

Without any reason at all, they were confined to the "hole," which is an isolation punishment cell, under very severe conditions. This punishment was the first violation and it lasted for 17 months. Within the U.S. regulations, a prisoner cannot be held in isolation over 60 days, because it can lead to psychological disorders. In this case these regulations were violated.

Another severe violation was the refusal of the judge to change the venue for the trial. We did everything possible to make sure that the trial was not held in the city of Miami because the Florida Keys are precisely where the groups who came to Cuba in the 1990s on such a large scale to carry out terrorist acts were located.

The judge told our lawyers, among her reasons for denying the change of venue, that she was going to provide a fair trial. In 2001 we realized she was just a part of all this farce, of all of these violations of human and constitutional rights.

There was an article published at the beginning of the trial, at the conclusion of the hearing, in which the Miami Herald said that those who were charging them were also being charged. At that point it looked like justice was going to prevail, and we were blinded by hope.

We were told that, when a trial lasts seven months with so many situations that are openly unfair, the jury usually feels confused by all the information and they have questions for the judge. But this jury ended without any questions at all and totally under pressure, declared them to be guilty of all 26 charges.

That was something quite hard both for our children, and for the very prestigious U.S. lawyers to understand, who had been certain that the Constitution was going to be honored and that justice would be done

The jury was totally pressured by this terrorist mafia; these Cubans who decided to leave our country and have done nothing but seek revenge on our children out of impotence toward attempting to undermine our revolution and its strength. So what were we to say when this injustice was revealed? Our struggle for the appeal began right then and there.

In 2001, we returned to court for sentencing. At that point we already knew there was political manipulation against Lolita (Olga) and René. After living in the United States for a couple of years while René was behind bars, when the trial was about to begin, the U.S. government decided to detain Lolita so as to psychologically destabilize René to get him to give up his principles. René and Lolita refused to do so.

Lolita was deported back to Cuba after being incarcerated for three

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months. René's mother traveled all the way from Cuba to the United States to pick up their daughter, Ivette, who was only 2 years old, and bring her back to Cuba to her mother, because they were afraid of another incident like the case of Elián Gonzales. Fortunately, they both managed to get back to Cuba.

Later, Gerardo's wife Adriana was granted a visa just like the rest of us, in order to participate in the sentencing trial. Adriana departed for the United States to meet with Gerardo, so they could participate in the trial. Regretfully, when we reached Houston she was detained for 11 hours then sent back to Cuba because of a warning, "If we let you in the United States you are going to be put in prison." Since then, Adriana has never been able to return to the U.S.

The strongest violation was impeding the possibility for both René and Lolita, Gerardo and Adriana, to see each other. They were not satisfied with just internment — they had to make the wives miserable by not letting them see their husbands ever again. This is an obstacle that we are fighting every day.

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Olga "Lolita" Salanueva talks about her experience and what she learned from a recent speaking tour on behalf of the Cuban Five.

First Appeal Results in a Reversal of a Reversal

Our first hope came in 2005 when a panel of three appellate judges in the United States Circuit Court for the Eleventh Circuit declared unanimously that the trial had not been fair, and they revoked the sentences and ordered a new trial.

Afterwards, our lawyers said that when a panel at this level unanimously issues a statement that reveals to the public eye the truth about all the violations, this would overturn the prior decision. However the prosecution, representing the government, filed an appeal to the plenary, for a review by the full 11th Circuit panel of judges.

Editor's note: The appeal process has lasted 9 years. On August 9, 2005, a three-judge panel of the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the convictions of all five accused on the grounds that they had not received a fair trial in Miami. In an unexpected move, the government asked the twelve judges of the Eleventh Circuit to review the panel's decision through a so-called en banc *procedure. Exactly one year later, on August 9, 2006, in spite of the strong disagreement voiced by two of the three judges who had made up the initial panel, (the third judge having retired), the Court vacated, by majority, the decision of the unanimous three-judge panel on the question of fair trial and change of venue. The Court did send the case back to the district court for consideration of other issues, which ultimately led to a resentencing in 2008.)*

After this appellate court decision, there was one window of opportunity left for our cause that gave us reason to consider there could be a day of justice. We submitted a petition, a writ of certiorari, to the U.S. Supreme Court, endorsed by many organizations including a resolution by the United Nations Human Rights Commission on Arbitrary Detention in 2005 which stated unanimously that the Five's imprisonment was arbitrary, and urged the U.S. government to hold a new trial and reexamine those sentences.

(Editor's note: There were 12 friends of the court briefs filed on behalf of the Cuban Five; ten Nobel Laureates, as well as the Mexican Senate, the National Assembly of Panama, and Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland (1992-97) and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (1997-2002), and UNESCO General Director Federico Mayor, among others, signed the amicus briefs. They were joined by hundreds of parliamentarians around the world, among them 75 members of the European Parliament, including two ex presidents and three current vice presidents of this Legislature; as well as numerous legal and human rights associations of different countries of Europe, Asia and Latin America, international personalities and legal and academic organizations in the United States. On June 15, 2009 the U.S. Supreme Court announced, without explanation, its decision not to review the case of the Five, in spite of the solid arguments made by the defense attorneys related to the obvious and multiple legal violations committed during the whole trial.)

Resentencing Continues the Charade

I'm trying to control my feelings of despair whenever we have to retell this story of the resentencing, where there is so much malevolence. On the one hand, I have an interest to make sure that I bring my child home. On the other hand, I have to fight these violations of basic rights.

My God, this trial in 2001 was a total farce. Nothing made sense. It was something that made me cry for two days and I still cry.

In the original trial, the DA said she didn't have the evidence to push for first-degree murder and wanted to change the charges, but the judge refused. The DA did nothing and simply let it happen. Gerardo was charged by this jury, convicted of first-degree murder, a violation that the DA did nothing to prevent.

In 2008, we heard that the panel had ordered re-sentencing for three of the five and two of them were left out. Obviously Gerardo and René were the ones left out. Antonio and Ramón were charged with something that Gerardo was also charged with, conspiracy to commit espionage. Gerardo was not sentenced on this charge. Why? He already had a life sentence from another conviction for something that was even more unfair, something even more infamous — the charge of first-degree murder as a result of an action that was a right of our government in responding to a violation of our air space. It was only after seven months into the trial that this charge was inserted into the case.

That is how our children received these sentences in 2009.

The first to be sentenced was my son, on October 13th. I was lucky to be accompanied by many friends who traveled in solidarity from different countries to support this cause. The DA said she could not press for life imprisonment because the panel of appellate judges overturned the original life sentence issued to Antonio nine years ago, for being in violation of the sentencing guidelines. So the sentences issued in 2001 in this case were improperly applied; a very blatant violation that the DA admitted to.

The appellate court ordered the judge to rectify all of this, including releasing the Cuban 5 from isolation so they could confer with each other and their attorneys on their defense for the case.

The DA told the judge that she did not see herself moving toward consideration of a life sentence because of a lack of evidence, and international criticism about how North American justice had not been applied properly.

At the very end, as the judge was about to pronounce the new sentences, the judge calmly told my son that his attorney had asked her to consider that she is going to sentence a man, not a nation. The judge told my son that they were men, but their actions represented Cuba. She admitted that my son had not done any damage to the national security of the United States, that there was no document meeting the criteria of espionage. However, considering what he had in mind, what he intended, she sentenced him to 21 years and 10 months because, in her estimation, he was thinking about it.

My son would have never thought of such a thing, to try to get documents in order to hurt the United States. My son was born in the United States in 1958, in Jackson Hospital in Miami, Florida. I always taught my children, because both of them were born in the

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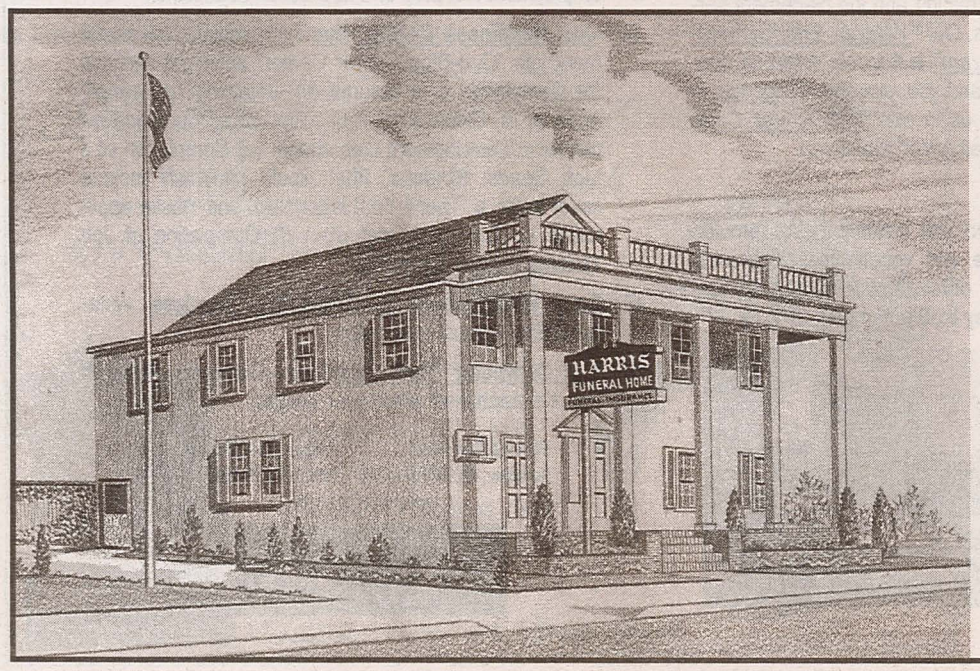

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Cuban Five

Continued from page 17

U.S., to respect the country that witnessed their birth, and also to love the country that witnessed their growing up. They were not born in Cuba, but raised here.

Then came the trial of Ramón; he was originally sentenced to life plus 18 months. The judge re-sentenced him to a 30-year term. Ramón was already more than 30 years old, so she thinks he is going to be very old when he gets out.

In the case of Fernando, justice was not done either. Fernando was originally sentenced to 19 years and was re-sentenced to 17 years and 9 months. His sentence was shortened by less than a year and a half.

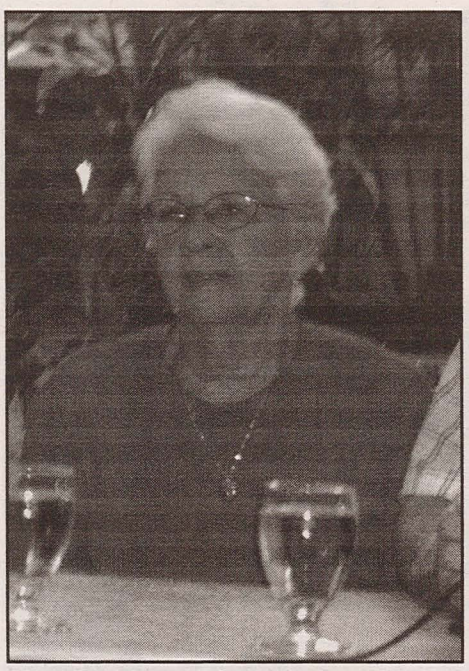
The Struggle is Not Over

We have come to realize that there is no justice in the United States. Violations have come one right after the other, and they will continue to do so.

As a mother, I may tell you that if I did not have conviction on my side, if I did not know these men and their human values, I wouldn't be here today asking you to help. I wouldn't be here today saying that we are at a critical moment in the struggle.

We take every chance that we get to speak out about this, every invitation we get to talk with someone to show our appreciation. We're not going to allow a single day to go by without struggling for this.

Antonio has two sons, one is 25 and one is 17, who barely knows his father because he has not been able to visit him. Then there is Ivette who came here when she was two years old and she is 12 already. There is also Lisbeth, who was a girl back then, now she is a young lady. Our children and their parents have been deprived of these beautiful things; the kisses, the loving care, the raising and taking care of their children.



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Mirta Rodríguez Pérez, mother of Cuban 5 member Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez.

They are incarcerated, but they belong in our lives. They have loving homes. In spite of this distance, the love has grown. It is not easy for those who can go visit. For those who can't, it's even worse. I hope that nothing like this ever happens to you, that you face such treachery.

That's why your efforts in your countries to plead for their release are so important. This struggle will continue until the day when we know that our children are set free in Cuba. However, we are not hopeless, we continue to be optimistic about it. We are not losing our joy. Most importantly, our children are not losing their joy, either.

That is why I come to you to give thanks this morning. I wish that I could speak to a group like this on a daily basis because it replenishes my strength and makes me feel what I have always felt, that fortunately we are not alone. It is a gift that life has given us because our cause is just.

Now I am going to give the floor to Lolita to continue to answer the rest of the questions. I am certain that victory will eventually be ours; otherwise I wouldn't be alive. Thank you.

Olga "Lolita" Salanueva: Mirta has elaborated a lot; however, I would like to clarify a few points.

The violations you asked about were both legal violations and human violations, all with malicious intent toward us. Sometimes it is hard to tell them apart, because they overlap. We draw a conclusion from that.

The principal violations began precisely by not honoring the Constitution of the very country that arrested them to begin with. Right after that violation all the others may be divided.

What we see on the television and the movies is that there are civil rights, that people get attorneys. It was nothing like that. They were not even told they were entitled to a lawyer. I was an eyewitness to the arrest of my husband. I myself was a direct victim of how our rights were violated.

We were pushed against the wall and beaten up on the floor. Nobody talked about lawyers. There were no lawyers around. There were no lawyers, either, for the first 72 hours, in which these five men were directly and intensely interrogated and they couldn't call their relatives. Can you imagine a man witnessing how his family is dealt with right before he leaves, but is not permitted to speak on the phone to his family? Here are his wife and daughters, one who was 14 years old, and the other was only 4 months old.

I will never forget René's words after he was able to talk to me, long after he was sentenced in front of the court. René said, "When you are deprived of all your rights, when you are confined and you are incommunicado, you don't realize that you are going through the most intense hours you are going to live. At that moment you have to think: Either you get yourself freed of everything that attaches you to the external world, even though it is deeply painful to you, or you will begin to find excuses for treason."

And that was the intent, the expectation that he would create excuses in reaction to the direct humiliation, to the violation of all their rights as human beings so that he would break. And even after 12 years of this, the United States government has not been able to coerce these five people to find excuses for treason. That's why they have been taken time and time again to the hole.

Their Letter to the People of the U.S. was Never Published

When the Five were found guilty in 2001, they felt the need to write a letter to the people of the United States

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Inter-City Services, Inc. (ICS) Workforce Training Institute is a non-profit 501(c)(3) community-based organization that was incorporated on July 7, 1984.

ICS receives its funding from the City of Berkeley, State of California various government agencies as well as from corporate and individual donations.

ICS' Board of Directors, composed of professionals and community leaders establishes policy. ICS Executive Director and staff, composed of dedicated experts in their field of work, implement the program objectives.

GOALS

ICS' goal is to provide high/growth high/wage employment/training opportunities that replaces dependency with self-sufficiency. ICS' further goal is to help clients remove barriers and enable them to obtain employment that pays a livable wage.

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ICS' clientele consists of both youth and adults—18 years and older. ICS' community-based, non-traditional training options provides clients with a positive educational and training environment. Opportunities are available for clients that are serious about up-grading and/or acquiring new skills. Clients includes the following:

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- Public/Private Sector employees
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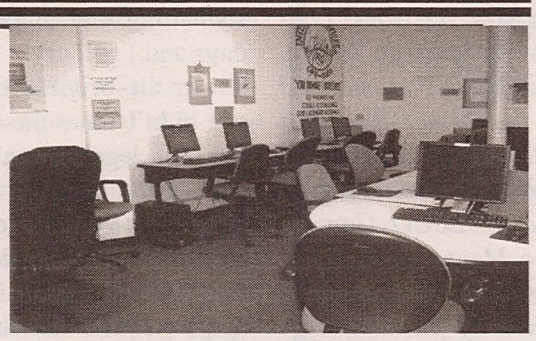
- Low/Moderate Income
- Substance Abusers
- Displaced Homemakers
- Immigrants



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ICS operates a WIA training component that specifically provides ***tuition-free*** skill training and job placement services to all eligible veterans. Our ***"Veteran Employment-Related Assistance Program"*** is the only Veterans' specific employment/training and job placement agency in the East Bay. Please join us in our ***"Tell A Vet Campaign".*** Again, please, "Tell A Vet" thank you.

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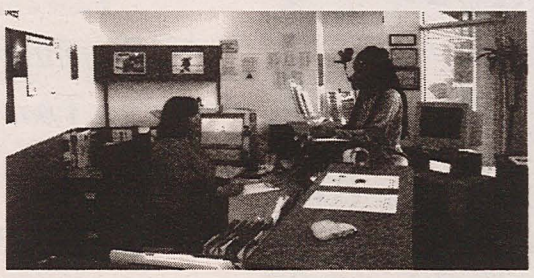

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to explain to them that at no time whatsoever did they intend to do harm to the American people, that they were just monitoring the actions of terrorist organizations that had caused harm for almost 50 years to our people and those of the United States, as well. They were already convicted; this letter would not set them free.

I'm sure that, after more than 12 years, most of you do not know about those letters that were supposed to be published, supposed to be known by the people of the United States.

No way. The reaction was to send them back to solitary confinement, to the hole once again. From that point on, that has been the case. That's why now Gerardo is again in the hole. The violation is right there. Gerardo has the right to communicate with his attorney, the right to review documents, and talk on the phone. Now, since he receives so much correspondence because he has lots of relations, they are trying to use that against him as they have used it against two others.

Suddenly people alien to the prison show up from the FBI. They were called over and we're told that there were problems with the correspondence. What problem can there be? All correspondence goes through official hands and gets reviewed before it gets to the inmates. They said it was necessary to remove all the correspondence from them, every single note, every single document, everything. And take him all by himself to a punishment cell, to a solitary confinement cell and he was never told how long he was supposed to be there.

Gerardo, however, like all inmates, is in the middle of a prison population where there are viruses and bacteria like there are in any institutionalized setting. He was having health problems. We have documents that show he requested an appointment in April that was not granted until the end of July.

They took his blood pressure, said he had hypertension, lab tests were ordered and he was told that he very likely had some virus or bacteria, but that would need to be double checked in a lab.

It was just after this medical exam when the problem about Gerardo's correspondence came up. He was taken from one cell of the prison to another that happened to be the only one that had a problem with ventilation. California is like Cuba and the climate there gets very hot in the summer, but not intolerable unless you are locked up in a little room without air conditioning.

And that is why the President of our National Assembly is saying that the U.S. Government is totally responsible if anything happens to Gerardo, both from a human point of view and also from legal course of action that may need to take place.

As Mirta already stated, the refusal to grant visas had been taking place simultaneously along with the other violations. Mirta has already spoken about what happened to Adriana; she was sent back to Cuba. Never, ever has she been able to see Gerardo again.

If the Cuban 5 are Such Big Enemies of the U.S., Why is Their Case Not Publicized in the Press?

How come when the government of the United States had been charging for 12 years, that this person is a big enemy of the United States, the press is totally ignoring him and the public doesn't know about him? How come without any piece of evidence, he has been condemned forever and behind bars? What is the reason that you're denying him the possibility of seeing his wife? I believe that all these violations need to be publicized to influence public opinion.

That is why we cannot give up that movement with post cards. You were asking, if that has had any type of influence? We can assure you that it has, and that was witnessed by what the DA said at the resentencing, which Mirta was talking about. And ask the DA again, "How is it possible that you yourself, a representative of the government, several years ago, and in 2001 were telling me that these two men, Ramón and Gerardo, were incarcerated and supposed to die in jail.

"Now you are trying to tell me that the court found that the sentences were not properly given. And you said you just did what they told you to do.

"Why are you telling me something that is totally different?"

And then you might have to know that there was a certain movement, internationally, that was letting her know that justice had not been done.

They had to clean up the image and reduce the sentences for these two people, because of all the efforts. How after all these years did we finally begin to impact the public opinion, which for the most part, does not even know that this is taking place?

That is because of this movement, a movement of solidarity, a movement of letters and correspondence and questioning; that was victorious for the first time ever when the sentences were reduced. But that is not enough. We cannot be satisfied with that. Because we demanded that they should be out free and clear. To do that, we must grow bigger.

You were wondering what to do. We can answer that every country has its own characteristics. Each one has adjusted them and changed tactics in order to get the case known. In Europe we have reached the Parliament. The

Continued on page 20

Interview with Family Members of the Cuban Five

The Cuban Five — "They will return!" This message along with their images are seen everywhere throughout Cuba, never to be forgotten.

Commemorator Editor Melvin Dickson had the opportunity to speak with Mirta Rodríguez Pérez and Olga "Lolita" Salanueva after their presentation:

Dickson: Thank you for your update on the situation of the unjustly imprisoned Cuban Five. You spoke clearly about how the U.S. courts have violated all their human rights, and asked that we get this information out to our community and encourage people to correspond with the courageous Cuban Five.

We will print this story in our publication, *The Commemorator*. We know how important it is to get this story to the American people in light of the media blackouts on the subject.

Olga "Lolita" Salanueva, wife of René Gonzalez Sehwerert: We know that you have been supporting us all along. We know that many publications have reached their [Cuban Five] hands, even though they are in prison, which we know is not an easy thing to do. It is even more difficult, because it is in the United States but that is where we must wage the battle.

I'll tell you an anecdote. We have published books here with poems the Five have written. There was also a book with letters that they have exchanged with their relatives in Cuba. We have printed them here, and taken them to other countries.

I was in Spain once, with Adriana. We had planned to make a tour of several cities and our comrades from the embassy told us that some people were insisting that they take us to this town in Spain. They were thinking it was a small place, in the middle of nowhere, but we went anyway.

What first caught our attention was the fact that they had a very large group in solidarity with the Cuban Five, and were pretty much aware of the case. They had sent letters to the local government and we were amazed to find out how they were so familiar with this case. One of them had a friend in Cuba who used to live in that town and this friend in Cuba took a signed copy of the book with their letters they have exchanged with the family, back with him. The title of the book in English is "Letters of Love and Hope."

That book was taken to Spain, it was distributed and people started to read it and became interested and the interest increased to the point that a whole committee was created. So you can see how just one book, that you might not think is very important, can be enough to bring many people together. That's why we say that every action will be useful and we have thought of many things.

I spent some of my life in the USA, and in one of the businesses in which I worked, they used to sell programs to learn English. Their advertising campaign was published in the form of these small cards you put inside newspapers and can tear out, like coupons. They were placed inside the main newspapers so that more people would see them. I told people, why not use the same method to include leaflets or coupons or something inside the big newspapers saying something like: "Do you know there are five Cubans in U.S. prisons for the last 12 years?" and include the web site of the Cuban Five National Committee. That communication, that small leaflet has brought broader attention to this struggle.

And that's what we've been doing. That's how we have managed to come this far. We have gotten in touch with ten Nobel Prize winners who knew nothing about the Cuban Five, people who have been awarded the Chemistry prize or a Physics Nobel prize.

We've been doing what the main newspapers were supposed to be doing. Of course had they published this from the beginning, perhaps the Five would have been in prison only one year.

There is a book by Gerardo, with designs drawn in it, like a comic book. Gerardo is a very joyful person, and someone whose caricatures can make people laugh. Gerardo made his drawings while he was in the hole and they have become a symbol of this struggle. And sometimes we give out the book to people and ask if they enjoyed it, and they wonder how come someone who can make so many people laugh, someone who is so joyful, can be going through this? How come these men cannot see their wives or their children? So you would expect that they would be bitter or angry. That is something people wonder about. He has to be an extraordinary person.

This has helped, as painful as it is to us to hear about personal family things, it is easier to spread the word so people can help. We also ask people to get to know them better, not only to become familiar with them from the point of view of the legal case, but also from the human point of view. Because then they will find it a lot easier to help. Because, truth be told, these are ordinary individuals.

Reaching your readers with an article, and asking that they all do something to put pressure where it is needed would be another way to help this just cause. Thank you.

All Power to the People!

Illustration by Jonik

Chip's Reminiscences

Continued from page 6

and to see the joy on their faces was the most rewarding, fulfilling experience of my young life!

To keep Black people down and exploit their labor and dollars, racist paramilitary organizations like the Ku Klux Klan (whose actions were condoned by the government at every level) and racist police operated in the Black Communities like an occupying army, terrorizing the people with brutality and murder.

Point Seven of the Platform: We Want an Immediate End to Police Brutality and Murder of Black People. The Panthers emphasis on armed self-defense was consistent with the teachings of Malcolm X that Black people have a human right to self-determination and must arm ourselves to protect and enforce that right.

The practice of picking up the gun and declaring to the world that Black people would no longer accept the terrorist actions of the U.S. government and the police reduced the attacks on the people throughout the ghettos. We saw that the Black masses felt a new pride and strength by the concrete examples that we set for them, and the People began to look toward the Panthers for answers.

But it was the Tenth Point of The Platform And Program that embodied the Panthers' revolutionary thrust; it called for a United Nations' supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black Colony in which only Black colonial subjects would be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people regarding our national destiny.

This unprecedented radical proposal clearly distinguished the Panthers from other Black organizations such as the Nation of Islam and the Republic of New Africa that were committed to the demand of a separate territory/land base within the U.S. The distinction was even clearer with the NAACP, Urban League, Dr King Jr's SCLC who were pursuing a program of integration of Black people into American society as the means for achieving our salvation and freedom. The Panthers held the correct position: a politically educated people have the right to exercise the democratic principle and determine our own destiny.

Not only did the Panthers capture Black people's imagination, our revolutionary theory and practice resonated among a large part of the general public. The people were calling for a revolutionary change in government and for a new constitution.

The agents of repression were unleashed by the U.S. government and their undeclared war silenced the voices of revolution. The evidence was the number of Panthers killed by U.S. government agencies and police for the purpose of disconnecting the vanguard Party from the Black masses.

But, contrary to popular belief, it was not government repression that killed the Panthers. The Party ceased to address the needs and desires of the People, and the leadership became arrogant and disconnected from both the people and rank-and-file members.

As Mao Tse-Tung pointed out in his philosophical essay, *On Contradiction*, 'external contradictions are the conditions of change, whereas internal contradictions are the basis for change'.

This principle applies to the Panthers: regardless of how much repression we faced, if we were not internally weak we would not have been susceptible to the insidious plots of the U.S. government. The Party lost faith in the people.

Without the participation of the people there can be no revolution! The people are the real heroes and sheroes!

All Power to the People!

Cuban Five

Continued from page 19

solidarity movement has been advancing there.

We need each of you in your community to adapt that to your characteristics. Those of you who live in the United States, you would have to adapt to the situations in the different States. You even have your own press — the local newspaper and the large press as well as the independent media.

How is it possible for them to be behind bars for 12 years when people claim to have the right to live free in the United States?

How come that does not appear on the main pages of the press? What is the interest in keeping the story of the Cuban 5 quiet? Obviously the answer is that there wasn't any espionage. They were exposing documented, U.S.-financed terrorism against Cuba.

The people in the United States should know about this case. If the evidence the Cuban 5 discovered is not lies, then why are they behind bars? Why haven't they been given their rights to defend themselves? Why is the Constitution not being honored?

What is being done to the Cuban 5 could happen to anyone in the U.S., as long as justice is not won for them.

The American people should be afraid that tomorrow, even as citizens of the United States, any one of you could be the next to be unjustly incarcerated and forgotten about by the rest of the world.

You know better than I how to go about publicizing the case of the Cuban 5 because you are there. We cannot allow ourselves to be silenced, not even for one day. Because the legal issue is practically over. Three of them with long sentences and René and my husband with sentences of fifteen years that have been practically completed.

But after that, since they were born in the U.S., they must stay in the United States for three more years after their sentences during which they will still not be able to see their wives because of a post-release sentence of "incapacitation," imposing specific restrictions on them after their release, which would be enforced by the FBI.

I won't be able to get a visa to go see him, either. So I stay here alone with my daughters. Our household is not united because they destroyed it. They deported me from there for no reason at all. They deported me because René refused to cut a deal with them and betray his comrades so we could stay in the United States.

In Gerardo's case, we will be filing the Habeas Corpus writ. It has to be filed with the very judge, Joan Lenard, who presided over the original case in Miami. This is a mockery of a case.

Their freedom may be in the hands of Obama, but he will not come out on our behalf of his own free will. We have to compel the administration with demonstrations of how this is in the public good.

The Cuban 5 count you among their friends and acknowledge the huge bond we share; they acknowledge the effort every one of you makes, dedicating time to build solidarity with them. It is the time in your life to step up for our collective survival, because you have such a big opportunity and need in front of you.

We will never be tired of thanking you. We know that our friends are going to be there — all those who have done something and there will be so many of us that we won't all fit in one place. Thank you all very much.

Mirta Rodríguez Pérez: I believe we should finish the way we came in.

This is a morning of life and hope. Thank you! Victory Forever! Fight for their release!

All Power to the People!

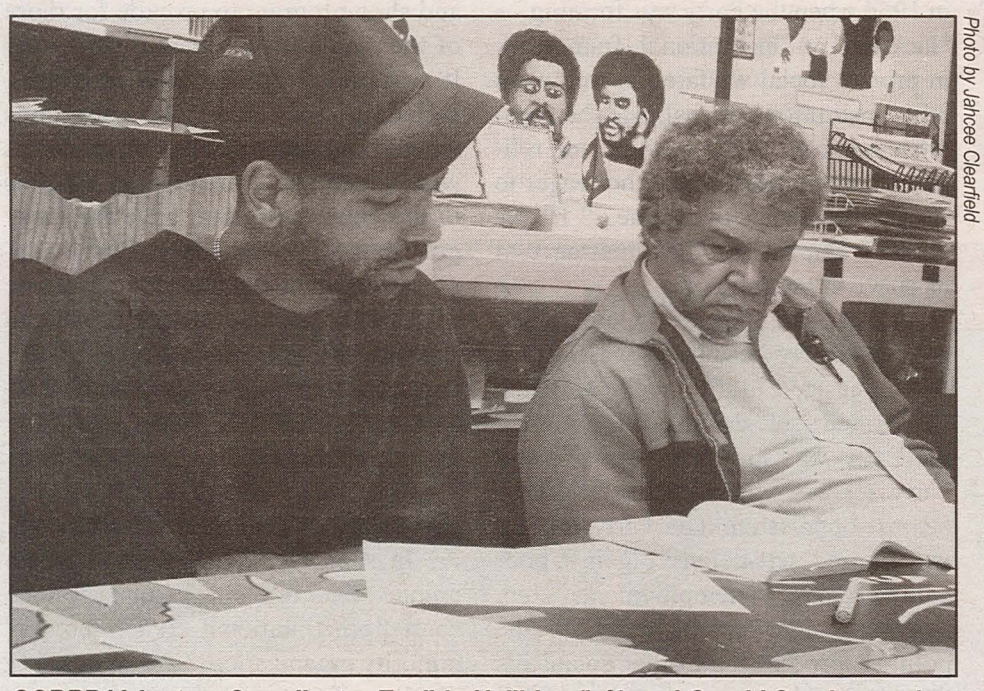

Photo by Jahcee Clearfield

CCBPP Volunteer Coordinator Eseibio Halliday (left) and Gerald Sanders, volunteer, discussing political writings at a weekly adult reading session.

CCBPP Advances

Continued from page 1

our local community as well as their neighborhoods.

"I learned through political classes how history actually happens," stated Jahcee, who is a videographer. "I'm also learning about building camaraderie with oppressed people with different point of views. I'm learning new math techniques, and all this enhances my reading. This helps me to evaluate things that are really happening to me as opposed to what you see on television."

Teaching Principles While Building Reading, Writing Skills

Currently three volunteer tutors are leading the weekly reading sessions, and all those who participate are taking on CCBPP assignments such as circulating *The Commemorator*, which reports on news pertinent to our communities through the framework of the Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program. CCBPP has put out a call for more reading tutors so that we can expand the number of sessions and participants.

"What I see is that real reading, understanding and the pronunciation of different words, along with the understanding of the Black Panther Party's history is very important to understand what BPP was about," said Joyce Hunter, an adult student who is interested in learning to write. "Helping poor and disadvantaged people to learn reading and writing, and teaching them their rights, as well as pointing out what is wrong with society and what can be done to change some of the negative things, makes sense to me.

"The Ten-Point Program outlines goals and principles that demand a fundamental change in our government in meeting the needs of the masses. CCBPP has adopted those principles in the continuation of that awesome struggle 45 years ago," Hunter continued. "It is a challenge for all who participate."

At a recent CCBPP membership meeting, Dickson stated that conditions today are worse in many ways than they were back when the Black Panther Party was founded 45 years ago. One in five children in the United States still goes to bed hungry, one out of three African American men are in prison, on probation or on parole and the majority of our people cannot make a decent living.

"The education system is in ruins," Dickson said. "Illiteracy, especially among people of color, is in epidemic proportions. Out of an Oakland population of 400,000 people, 85,000 adults are functionally illiterate. There are more of our young people imprisoned than enrolled in colleges today. Welfare has been transformed into workfare, where poor people have to work up to 30 hours each week just to receive a social service check and food stamps; which is the time the person would need to seek paid employment. Our people face an AIDS epidemic and all sorts of diseases, including the rise of tuberculosis; at the same time poor people are being denied health care because we simply cannot pay for treatment. The Ten-Point Program of the Black Panther Party made sense then and it makes sense now because it squarely addresses these needs. What we need now is more people to help build these programs. It's the way we can build systemic solutions."

Drawing Lessons from History to Make Systemic Change

CCBPP members are also taking part in educational presentations and film showings with audience discussion to connect the material with today's realities.

"I'm not a high school graduate," stated Harold Woodard, who is now a trained nurse. "But since I started volunteering with CCBPP's Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign, I'm able to see how some people profit from people who can't read and write in this country. I also learned from the documentary on Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt) about how the government attacked people through COINTELPRO by framing and assassinating the leaders, in their effort to shut down the Black Panther Party who were fighting for basic civil rights and basic human rights."

"I watched the film 'Nightjohn,' which highlights the importance of education — the basics, reading, writing and math skills that most literate people take for granted — to lift people out of an oppressive condition," stated Mario Willis, who is now in training to lead outreach as CCBPP's Speaking Engagement Coordinator. "The film relates particularly to Point Number Five of the BPP Ten-Point Program, which is to learn about the world to change it, as it applied to freedom."

Manmade Disasters... and Solutions!

CCBPP honored the late Geronimo jiJaga (Pratt) (See *Remembrance* on page 12) at an event on July 17 that took place in Oakland's Li'l Bobby Hutton (DeFremery) Park. "We have to take the lessons from our past — including lessons Geronimo exhorted us to in 1997 when we celebrated his release from prison," stated Dickson at a recent membership meeting. "He saw what happens to a political movement up against a powerful oppressor when you start taking government money for your community programs, for instance. We have to give this kind of education to our youth, those who were not around when the U.S. government unleashed their reactionary forces against the Black Panther Party, where the facts of what the Black Panther Party was actually doing were hidden by the corporate media and the propaganda and repression from other bourgeoisie institutions. We have to provide the people with our programs, such as the Li'l Bobby Hutton Literacy Campaign."

Many examples of acute government abandonment of responsibility towards people in low-income areas are being discussed in CCBPP's weekly membership meetings. Another example involves concerns raised by some members that in the East Bay's low-income communities in Oakland, Richmond and Berkeley there is no disaster relief training for the community, and no resources for the community in the case of disaster. "If an earthquake hit, right here now, we would find ourselves no better off than the poor communities in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina in 2005," stated Shaw Carter, a CCBPP volunteer who has been leading up neighborhood canvasses with a team of volunteers from Laney Community College.

Dickson pointed out, however, that as long as our communities are robbed of jobs with living wages, decent housing, health care and education, every day is a disaster in need of emergency relief. We know that the only real solution is to put the resources and power into the hands of the working class to fulfill the Ten-Point Program.

All Power to the People!

CCBPP Photo

Jahcee Clearfield (left), CCBPP member, and Ayana LaBossiere, who provides math tutoring at Li'l Bobby Hutton literacy sessions.

Pelican Bay Hunger Strike

Continued from page 11

windows, where the lights are never turned off, leading to a loss of any sense of time.

If added to the tormenting elements described above are cold, heat, nudity, lack of water for personal hygiene or incessant noise, the conditions in which these prisoners must survive can be understood as clearly inhumane.

Up until 1968, lashings with a "strap" were common in U.S. prisons, but beginning in the 1990's with the expansion of its construction, the SHU is currently more widely used. Estimates indicate that, on any given day, there are at least 75,000 and up to 100,000 prisoners being held in isolation in the United States.

In Pelican Bay, there are prisoners suffering from serious respiratory ailments, heart problems and dehydration resulting from exposure to temperatures reaching 43 degrees Celsius (109.4 degrees Fahrenheit) on occasion in these cells.

In the meantime, over the past few days, many relatives of prisoners have gathered around California prisons to express support for the hunger strikers' demands.

Similar actions have taken place in U.S. cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle, Los Angeles, Cleveland and Harlem in New York, as well as in the Canadian cities of Toronto, Ontario and Montreal.

The common sentiment expressed is that no human being deserves to be subjected to such cruel and degrading treatment, as is stipulated in Article 5 of the Declaration of Human Rights.

A prisoner, Hugo Pinell, wrote to journalist Kiilu Nyasha from the SHU, "A move to a mainline [standard cell] would be great, being that my keepers are determined to keep me until I die."

Pinell was sent to prison in 1964; he was 19 years old. Since 1986 he has been held in the SHU within the Pelican Bay prison, and he longs for something as elemental as having "contact visits again. It's been too long since I've touched my Mom or any of my loved ones."

All Power to the People!

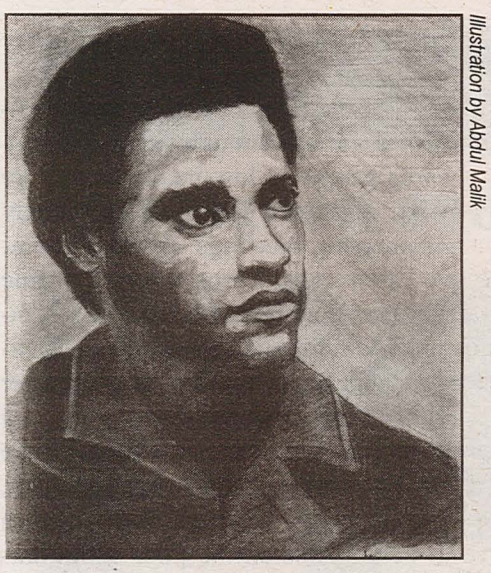

Illustration by Abdul Malik

Archives

Continued from page 4

> crush the ruling circle and therefore we had to unite with the peoples of the world. So we called ourselves Internationalists…We sought solidarity with what we thought were the nations of the world.

But then what happened? We found that because everything is in a constant state of transformation, because of the development of technology, because of the development of the mass media… and because of the fact that the United States is no longer a nation but an empire, nations could not exist, for they did not have the criteria for nationhood. Their self-determination, economic determination, and cultural determination has been transformed by the imperialists and the ruling circle. They were no longer nations. We found that in order to be Internationalists we had to be also nationalists, or at least acknowledge nationhood. Internationalism… means the interrelationship among a group of nations. But since no nation exists, and since the United States is in fact an empire, it is impossible for us to be Internationalists. These transformations and phenomena require us to call ourselves "Inter communalists" because nations have been transformed into communities of the world. The Black Panther Party now disclaims internationalism and supports intercommunalism.

Strategy for Building Community Institution: The Survival Programs

A second distinguishing characteristic of the Party has been its specific strategy to achieve revolutionary intercommunalism: the building of "survival" or community service programs. The purpose of these programs is to enable people to meet their daily needs by developing positive institutions within their communities and to organize the communities politically around these programs. This, of course, is nothing new when one thinks of certain minority or ethnic communities in the United States, such as the Jews or Chinese. Historically, one way these groups have affected their rise from deprivation is by developing communal associations, ranging from fraternal and religious bodies to political machines. The function of these community associations or institutions has been described … as "provid[ing] a base from which covert ethnic solidarity evolves into the political force required to overcome various forms of class inequality. They are therefore an important device by which the legitimate interests of particular groups are put forward to compete with those of other groups."

Unfortunately … "the Black community" — and this was especially true in 1966 when the Party was forming — "lack[ed] an institutional framework in private social welfare [as well as in other institutional areas], and the separatist agencies of other ethnic and religious communities [were] not eager to see this deficiency overcome..." Hence the BPP emphasized the importance of its survival programs….

What never became clear to the public, largely because it was always de-emphasized in the media, was that the armed self-defense program of the Party was just one form of what Party leaders viewed as self-defense against oppression. The Party had always urged self-defense against poor medical care, unemployment, slum housing, under-representation in the political process, and other social ills that poor and oppressed people suffer. The Panther means for implementing its concept of self-defense was its various survival programs, symbolized best by the police patrols and the free breakfast program for school children. In addition to these programs, however, the Party early initiated health clinics providing free medical and dental service, a busing program to take relatives of prisoners on visiting days, and an escort and transportation service for residents of senior citizen housing projects, as well as a clothing and shoe program to provide for more of the needs of the local community. It was these broad-based programs, including the free food programs where thousands of bags of groceries were given away to the poor citizens of the community that gave the Party great appeal to poor and Black people throughout the country. For one of the first times since the organized slave rebellions before the Civil War, Blacks were responding to an organization that tried to build community institutions and did so under the banner of a political ideology that directly challenged democratic capitalism….

In sum, the Panthers combined a unique blend of elements that set them apart from traditional civil rights and minority organizations: a revolutionary ideology that argued for the necessity of fundamental socioeconomic change, a practical series of survival programs that served the community and fostered institutional growth and consciousness, and a willingness to employ creative legal means within the democratic system to achieve their ends. It was these unique elements that made the Panthers popular with many Blacks and, at the same time, a nemesis to the federal government.

All Power to the People!

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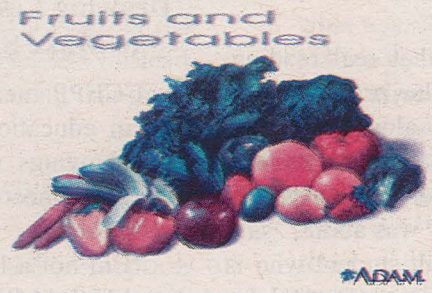

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CCBPP STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Commemoration Committee for the Black Panther Party (CCBPP) is committed to the goals of the Black Panther Party (BPP) as outlined in its Ten-Point Program which was written in 1966 by Party founders Dr. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The Ten-Point Program outlines goals and objectives toward changing conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression in all low-income and working class communities in the U.S. and elsewhere, as the basis for unity and solidarity.

Also, the CCBPP is committed to the concept of Revolutionary Intercommunalism, introduced by Dr. Newton in 1970 at Boston College. Our Revolutionary Intercommunalism holds that there are basically two sides. On one side there is reactionary intercommunalism which presently holds the world's low-income and working communities under conditions of economic exploitation and political oppression by controlling the wealth, resources and institutions in order to maximize profits for the few. Huey identified this side as the leading reactionary side (the ruling class) which consists of a minority, fewer than five percent of the world population. Under these conditions, reactionary intercommunalism, by and large, keeps the poor and working communities on a cycle of degradation, under conditions of reaction, desperation and poverty, with no end in sight. Newton understood that in order to change these conditions and advance the economic and cultural interests of these oppressed communities of the world, disciplined organizations must be built from the bottom up, enabling these low-income and working communities to fight exploitation and oppression by any means necessary (this fight needs to start in the advanced industrialized U.S. because our nation leads the world in political reaction and economic exploitation). CCBPP advances and upholds the goals which the BPP outlined in its Ten-Point Program, and those goals are about ridding black ghettos and low-income and working communities of economic exploitation and political oppression, understanding that we can reach these goals only by seizing the time at the point of practice.

Black Panther Party Ten-Point Program
WHAT WE WANT, WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. WE WANT FREEDOM, WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions that exist in our communities.

2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all its people and give a high standard of living.

3. WE WANT AN END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES. We believe that the racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency that will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING, FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS. We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

Black Panther Founder, Dr. Huey P. Newton

5. WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE. We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities that will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES. We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against Black people, other people of color, and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

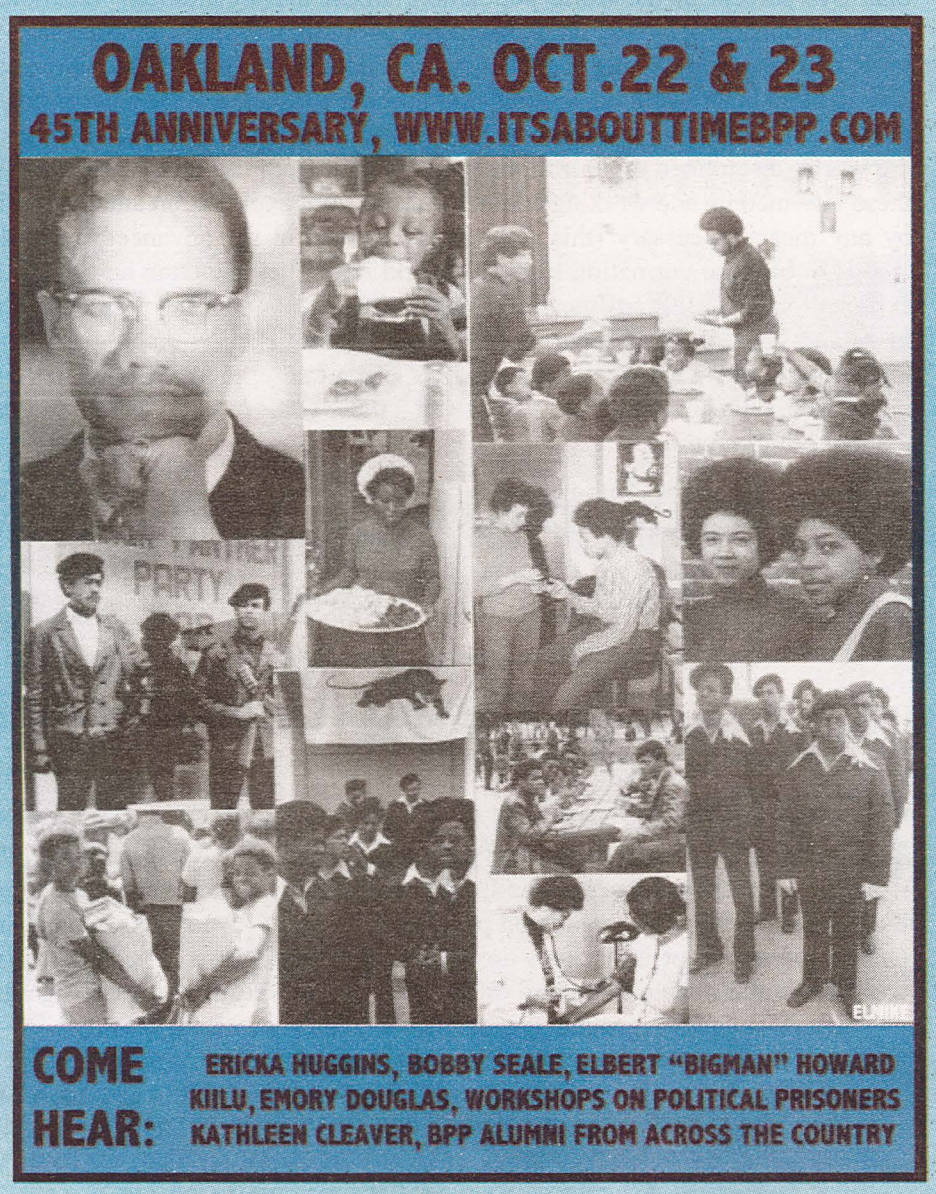
8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO ALL WARS OF AGGRESSION. We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U. S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U. S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND POOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U. S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY, AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS ARE CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY. We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in U. S. prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the U. S. military are the victims of oppressive conditions that are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons are brought to trial that they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trials.

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE'S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY. When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism. It is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.

Black Panther Party 45th Anniversary


OAKLAND, CA. OCT.22 & 23
45TH ANNIVERSARY, WWW.ITSABOUTTIMEBPP.COM
COME HEAR:
ERICKA HUGGINS, BOBBY SEALE, ELBERT "BIGMAN" HOWARD
KIILU, EMORY DOUGLAS, WORKSHOPS ON POLITICAL PRISONERS
KATHLEEN CLEAVER, BPP ALUMNI FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

Black Panther History Month Events

October 3rd
Panther Exhibit
Laney College Library
Entire Month of October

October 6th
Reception for Exhibit
Laney College Library
6PM

October 8th
Black Panther
Film Festival at Oakland
Main Public Library
12PM

October 21st
Meet and Greet
Eastside Arts Alliance
2277 International Blvd.
6 - 9PM

October 22nd
BPP 45th Celebration with Workshops
Black Repertory Theater
3201 Adeline St., Berkeley
10AM

October 23rd
BPP 45th Celebration
Bobby Hutton Park
18th & Adeline, Oakland
1PM

Free Drug War Graphs!
Updated with the latest data

The November Coalition

Honoring the Rank and File Members of the Panther Legacy

Founded in 1997, the November Coalition is a growing body of citizens whose lives have been gravely affected by our government's present drug policy. We are prisoners, parents of those incarcerated, wives, sisters, brothers, children, aunts, uncles and cousins. Some of us are loving friends and concerned citizens, each of us alarmed that drug war casualties are rising in absolutely horrific proportions.

The November Coalition
The November Coalition is a non-profit organization
Honoring the Rank and File Members of the Panther Legacy
282 West Astor • Colville, WA 99114 • (509) 684-1550 moreinfo@november.org

ITS ABOUT TIME

- Organized the 30th, 35th, and 40th year Black Panther Party Reunion Conferences
- Annual Bobby Hutton Day Celebration since 1998
- Geronimo jiJaga Day in Oakland 1997
- It's About Time Website established 1998 – ongoing
- It's About Time Newsletter published 1997 – 2004
- Established BPP history month with yearly educational activities in October since 2005
- Establishment and maintenance of BPP Archives
- Political Prisoner Work including founding members of the Angola 3 defense committee
- Consultants on multiple documentaries, books and research projects.
- Worldwide exhibits of Panther Legacy Photos and Memorabilia: Australia, New Zealand, England and all across the U.S.
- Hosted International Solidarity Conference in Tanzania 2009
- Maintain communications network of Panther alumni all over the world
- Books Behind Bars Program to send progressive reading materials to prisoners across the country
- BPP Speakers Bureau
- Established working and support relationship with UAACC (United African Alliance Community Center) in Tanzania – Pete and Charlotte O'Neal
- Provide a resource for reuniting family members, especially young people who have BPP relatives
- Recognition of fallen comrades

OFFICIAL WEBSITE OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY ALUMNI WORLDWIDE
ITSABOUTTIMEBPP.COM

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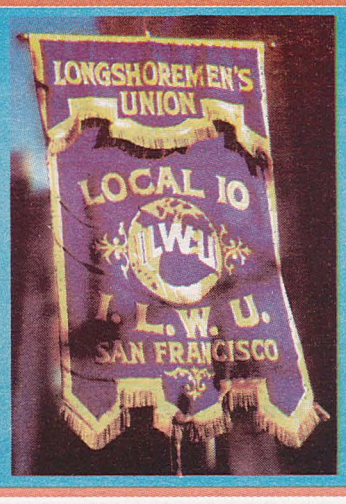
IN HONOR OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY'S 45TH ANNIVERSARY



ILWU: San Francisco/Oakland Local 10

Honors the BPP 45th Anniversary

"An injury to one is an injury to all"

Long Live the Spirit of the Black Panther Party

(415) 776-8100